THE Hudson REVIEW

PHILIP HOBSBAUM:
Calvinism in Action: The Super-Ego Triumphant

JAMES MERRILL:
Days of 1935—a long poem

RICHARD PEVEAR:
Notes on the Cantos of Ezra Pound

W. S. MERWIN AND CLARENCE BROWN:
Four Poems by Osip Mandelstam

PATRICIA MEYER SPACKS:
A Chronicle of Women

Poems by OCTAVIO PAZ, ROGER HOBDELL, JOHN HOLLOWAY, HILDA MORLEY.

Articles and Reviews by RICHMOND LATTIMORE, MARVIN MUDRICK, B. H. HAGGIN, GERALD WEALES, JOHN SIMON, VERNON YOUNG, BERNARD BERGONZI, WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD.

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OCTAVIO PAZ

Return

> Better not go back to the village, to the subverted paradise. . . .
>
> —R.L.V.

Voices at the corner's turn
voices
through the sun's spread hand
almost liquid
shadow and light
The carpenter whistles
the iceman whistles
three ash trees
whistling in the plaza
The invisible
foliage of sounds
growing
rising up
Time
stretched to dry on the rooftops
I am
in Mixcoac
The letters rot
in the mailboxes
The bougainvillea
flattened by the sun
against the wall's white lime
a stain
a purple
passionate calligraphy
I am walking back
back to what I left
or left me
Memory
the imminence of the precipice
balcony
over the vacuum

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I walk
and do not move forward
I am surrounded
by city
I lack air
My body deserts me
Noon
fist of light
that pounds and pounds
To collapse in an office
or onto the pavement
to end up in a hospital
the pain of dying
like that
isn't worth the pain

I look back
that passerby
is nothing now but mist
Nightmares sprout
in the bellies of movie houses
Catacombs of gas
electricity sewers
dreams
desires
The vegetation of disasters
ripens beneath the ground
They are burning
millions and millions of old notes
in the Bank of Mexico
Paralytic
architectures
stranded districts
rotting municipal gardens
deserted lots
mounds of saltpeter
camps of urban nomads
cans shingles plastics sanitary napkins
thoroughfares of scars
alleys of living flesh

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Funeral Parlours
whores
pillars of vain night
wait by the coffins' show-window
In the drifting bar
at dawn
the enormous mirror thaws
the solitary drinkers
contemplate
the dissolution of their faces
The wind
on the dusty corners
turns the papers
yesterday's news
more remote
than a cuneiform tablet
smashed to bits
Cracked scriptures
languages in pieces
The signs were broken
atl tlachinolli
was split
burned water
There is no center
plaza of congregation and consecration
there is no axis
the years dispersed
the horizons disbanded
They have branded the city
on every door
on every forehead
the $ sign

We are surrounded
I have gone back
to where I began
Did I win or lose?
(You ask
what laws rule "success" and "failure"
The songs

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of the fishermen
float up
from the unmoving riverbank
Wang Wei to the Prefect Chang
from his cabin on the lake
But I
don't want an intellectual hermitage
in San Angel or Coyoacán)
All
is gain
if all is lost
I walk toward myself
toward the plaza
the space is within
it is not a *subverted paradise*
it is a pulsebeat of time
places are confluences
flutters of beings in an instantaneous space
The wind whistles in the ash trees
fountains
almost liquid light and shadow
voices of water
shine flow are lost
a bundle of reflections
left in my hands
I walk without moving forward
We never arrive
Never reach where we are
Not the past
The present is untouchable

—*Translated by Eliot Weinberger*

The epigraph: The Mexican poet, Ramon Lopez Velarde, during the Mexican Revolution, went back to his village, saw the destruction caused by civil strife and wrote a poem in which he called it a "subverted paradise . . ."

Atl tlachinolli: burned water—not burning water, as it has been sometimes translated—water in flames, as the "wet flame" of Novalis. The Aztecs, in their wanderings around the lake of Mexico (today an urban desert of saltpeter), saw a bundle floating in the waters. They fished it out and found two wood sticks for making fire. The meaning was *atl tlachinolli:* the marriage of water and fire. This metaphor was the founding stone of Mexico-Tenochtitlan.

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JAMES MERRILL

Days of 1935

Ladder horned against moonlight,
Window hoisted stealthily
I'd steel myself in bed at night
To see, or sleep to see.

My parents were out partying,
My nurse was old and deaf and slow.
Way off in the servants' wing
Cackled a radio.

On the Lindbergh baby's small
Cold features lay a spell, a swoon.
It seemed entirely plausible
For my turn to come soon,

For a masked and crouching form
Lithe as tiger, light as moth,
To glide towards me, clap a firm
Hand across my mouth,

Then sheer imagination ride
Off with us in its old jalopy,
Trailing bedclothes like a bride
Timorous but happy.

A hundred tenuous dirt roads
Dew spangles, lead to the web's heart.
That whole pale night my captor reads
His brow's unwrinkling chart.

Dawn. A hovel in the treeless
Trembling middle of nowhere,
Hidden from the world by palace
Walls of dust and glare.

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A lady out of *Silver Screen,*
Her careful rosebud chewing gum,
Seems to expect us, lets us in,
Nods her platinum

Spit-curls deadpan (I will wait
Days to learn what makes her smile)
At a blue enamel plate
Of cold greens I can smell—

But swallow? Never. The man's face
Rivets me, a lightning bolt.
Lean, sallow, lantern-jawed, he lays
Pistol and cartridge-belt

Between us on the oilskin (I
Will relive some things he did
Until I die, until I die)
And clears his throat: "Well, Kid,

You've figured out what's happening.
We don't mean to hurt you none
Unless we have to. Everything
Depends on, number one,

How much you're worth to your old man,
And, number two, no more of this—"
Meaning my toothprints on his hand,
Indenture of a kiss.

With which he fell upon the bed
And splendidly began to snore.
"Please, I'm sleepy too," I said.
She pointed to the floor.

The rag rug, a rainbow threadbare,
Was soft as down. For good or bad
I felt her watching from her chair
As no one ever had.

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Their names were Floyd and Jean. I guess
They lived in what my parents meant
By sin: unceremoniousness
Or common discontent.

"Gimme—Wait—Hey, watch that gun—
Why don't these dumb matches work—
See you later—Yeah, have fun—
Wise guy—Floozie—Jerk—"

Or else he bragged of bygone glories,
Stores robbed, cars stolen, dolls betrayed,
Escape from two reformatories.
Said Jean, "Wish you'd of stayed."

To me they hardly spoke, just watched
Or gave directions in dumb-show.
I nodded back like one bewitched
By a violent glow.

Each morning Floyd went for a ride
To post another penciled note.
Indignation nation-wide
Greeted what he wrote.

Each afternoon, brought papers back.
One tabloid's whole front page was spanned
By the headline bold and black:
FIEND ASKS 200 GRAND.

Photographs too. My mother gloved,
Hatted, bepearled, chin deep in fur.
Dad glowering—was it true he loved
Others beside her?

Eerie, speaking likenesses.
One positively heard her mild
Voice temper some slow burn of his,
"Not before the child."

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The child. That population map's
Blanknesses and dots were me!
Mine, those swarming eyes and lips,
Centers of industry

Italics under which would say
(And still do now and then, I fear)
Is This Child Alive Today?
Last Hopes Disappear.

Toy ukelele, terrorstruck
Chord, the strings so taut, so few—
Tingling I hugged my pillow. *Pluck*
Some deep nerve went. I knew

That life was fiction in disguise.
My teeth said, chattering in Morse,
"Are you a healthy wealthy wise
Red-blooded boy? Of course?

Then face the music. Stay. Outwit
Everyone. Captivity
Is beckoning—make a dash for it!
It will set you free."

Sometimes as if I were not there
He put his lips against her neck.
Her head lolled sideways, just like Claire
Coe in "Tehuantepec."

Then both would send me looks so heaped
With a lazy, scornful mirth,
This was growing up, I hoped,
The first flushed fruits of earth.

One night I woke to hear the room
Filled with crickets—no, bedsprings.
My eyes dilated in the gloom,
My ears made out things.

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Jean: The kid, he's still awake . . .
Floyd: Time he learned . . . Oh Baby . . . God .
Their prone tango, for my sake,
Grew intense and proud.

And one night—pure "Belshazzar's Feast"
When the slave-girl is found out—
She cowered, face a white blaze ("Beast!")
From his royal clout.

Mornings, though, she came and went,
Buffed her nails and plucked her brows.
What had those dark doings meant?
Less than the fresh bruise

Powdered over on her cheek.
I couldn't take my eyes away.
Let hers meet them! Let her speak!
She put down *Photoplay*:

"Do you know any stories, Kid?
Real stories—but not real, I mean.
Not just dumb things people did.
Wouldja tell one to Jean?"

I stared at her—*she* was the child!—
And a tale came back to me.
Bluebeard. At its end she smiled
Half incredulously.

I spun them out all afternoon.
Wunspontime, I said and said . . .
The smile became a dainty yawn
Rose-white and rose-red.

The little mermaid danced on knives,
The beauty slept in her thorn bower.
Who knows but that our very lives
Depend on such an hour?

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The fisherman's hut became Versailles
Because he let the dolphin go . . .
Jean's lids have shut. I'm lonely. I
Am pausing on tiptoe

To marvel at the shimmer breath
Inspires along your radii,
Spider lightly running forth
To kiss the simple fly

Asleep. A chance to slip the net,
Wriggle down the dry stream bed,
Now or never! This child cannot.
An iridescent thread

Binds him to her slumber deep
Within a golden haze made plain
Precisely where his fingertip
Writes on the dusty pane

In spit his name, address, age nine
—Which the newspapers and such
Will shortly point to as a fine
Realistic touch.

Grown up, he thinks how S, T, you—
Second childhood's alphabet
Still unmastered, it is true,
Though letters come—have yet

Touched his heart occasioned words
Not quickened by design alone,
Responses weekly winging towards
Your distance from his own,

Distance that much more complex
For its haunting ritornel:
Things happen to a child who speaks
To strangers, mark it well!

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Thinks how you or V—where does
It end? will *any*one have done?—
Taking the wheel (cf. those "Days
of 1971")

Have driven, till his mother's Grade
A controls took charge, or handsome
Provisions which his father made
Served once again as ransom,

Driven your captive far enough
For the swift needle on the gauge
To stitch with delicate kid stuff
His shoddy middle age.

Here was Floyd. The evening sun
Filled his eyes with funny light.
"Junior, you'll be home real soon."
To Jean, "Tomorrow night."

What was happening? Had my parents
Paid? pulled strings? Or maybe I
Had failed in manners, or appearance?
Must this be goodbye?

I'd hoped I was worth more than crime
Itself, which never paid, could pay.
Worth more than my own father's time
Or mother's negligée

Undone where dim ends barely met,
This being a Depression year . . .
I'd hoped, I guess, that they would let
Floyd and Jean keep me here.

We ate in silence. He would stop
Munching and gaze into the lamp.
She wandered out on the dark stoop.
The night turned chill and damp.

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When she came in, she'd caught a bug.
She tossed alone in the iron bed.
Floyd dropped beside me on the rug.
Growled, "Sleep." I disobeyed.

Commenced a wary, mortal heat
Run neck by nose. Small fingers felt,
Sore point of all that wiry meat,
A nipple's tender fault.

Time stopped. His arm somnambulist
Had circled me, warm, salt as blood.
Mine was the future in his fist
To get at if I could,

While his heart beat like a drum
And *'Oh Baby'* faint and hoarse
Echoed from within his dream . . .
The next day Jean was worse.

No! Wouldn't dawn discover me
Sweating on my bedroom floor?
Was there no curbing fantasy
When one had a flair?

Came those nights to end the tale.
I shrank to see the money tumble,
All in 20s, from a teal
Blue Studebaker's rumble

Down a slope of starlit brush.
Sensed with anguish the foreseen
Net of G-men, heard the hush
Deepen, then Floyd's voice ("Jean,

Baby, we've been doublecrossed!")
Drowned out my punctual crossfire
That left the pillow hot and creased.
By three o'clock, or four,

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They stood in handcuffs where the hunt
Was over among blood-smeared rocks
—Whom I should not again confront
Till from the witness box

I met their stupid, speechless gaze.
How empty they appeared, how weak
By contrast with my opening phrase
As I began to speak:

"You I adored I now accuse . . ."
Would imagination dare
Follow that sentence like a fuse
Sizzling towards the Chair?

See their bodies raw and swollen
Sagging in a skein of smoke?
The floor was reeling where I'd fallen.
Even my old nurse woke

And took me in her arms. I pressed
My guilty face against the void
Warmed and scented by her breast.
Jean, I whispered, Floyd.

A rainy day. The child is bored.
While Emma bakes he sits, half-grown.
The kitchen dado is of board
Painted like board. Its grain

Shiny buff on cinnamon
Mimics the real, the finer grain.
He watches icing sugar spin
Its thread. He licks in vain

Heavenly flavors from a spoon.
Left in the metallic bowl
Is a twenty-five watt moon.
Somewhere rings a bell.

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Wet walks from the East porch lead
Down levels manicured and rolled
To a small grove where pets are laid
In shallow emerald.

The den lights up. A Sazerac
Helps his father face the *Wall*
Street Journal. Jules the colored (black)
Butler guards the hall.

Tel & Tel executives,
Heads of Cellophane or Tin,
With their animated wives
Are due on the 6:10.

Upstairs in yards of spangled blue
His mother puts her make-up on.
She kisses him sweet dreams, but who—
Floyd and Jean are gone—

Who will he dream of? True to life
He's played them false. A golden haze
Past belief, past disbelief . . .
Well. Those were the days.

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PHILIP HOBSBAUM

Calvinism in Action: The Super-Ego Triumphant

To the outsider, Christianity presents something of a double front. The duality can be located in the character of Jesus. On the one hand there is the bohemian prophet, every one of whose miracles was an act of kindness. On the other, there is the self-proclaimed God Incarnate. How do we reconcile "Love thine enemy" with "I come not to bring peace among you but fire and a sword"? One can only hope that the latter aspect is a result of biased interpretation by the Apostles and their successors. Certainly the antics of the disciples after the Ascension—striking people blind or dead in outbursts of self-righteousness—have little to do with what we might regard as the central ethic of Christianity. And if these parts of the New Testament are thought doubtful, what about the teaching of Paul? He, after all, condemned natural man as being full of sin, leaving it to the Church to find a way out of the resultant impasse.

To a great extent the teaching of Jesus has had to rely upon its interpreters. Whatever the merits of his individual pronouncements one could hardly say that they add up to a system. The links between one aperçu and the next are often provided by theologians, and savour not so much of exposition as of reading in notions of their own. Since each theologian's conscience is likely to differ from that of his fellows, each man's reading of Christ's work is likely to be subjective. This may account for the tendency Christianity has to split into schisms—some of which have little to do with their far-off original.

Unfortunately, such reading-in is necessary if a Church is to work as a system. And system is necessary if large numbers of people are to be controlled. The Church has to be a social entity as well as a spiritual one. What can be said is that one version of Christianity may be distinctly more anti-social than another. It is possible even for a non-believer to construct a hierarchy of pref-

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erence among the various systems sheltering under the blanket denomination of "Christianity."

The early Fathers of the Church had a difficult time in reconciling the attitudes of Jesus and of Paul. But, by the time of Aquinas, Catholicism existed as a system of working compromises. This was done partly by breaking down the concept of monotheism. The concept is intellectually satisfying and has the advantage of tracing the range of ethical requirements back to a single source. But, without the visible presence of God, it tends to be remote and abstract; lacks, in fact, crowd appeal. So the Church provided colourful God-surrogates in the person of the Virgin and the Saints. These acted as highly personalized intercessors between man and God. Naturally, corrupt practices crept in from time to time, but none that were incapable of being reformed from within the Church. One such reform was the purpose of the highly orthodox Lanfranc's visit to England on the invitation of William Rufus. The most powerful critics of Catholic ideology did their questioning from within clerical confines.

What one can say in favour of the medieval Church is that it worked. St. Thomas Aquinas was quite prepared to teach within the existing class framework. Troeltsch characterizes his ideology as based on the concept of a town which has an ordered exchange of goods with the surrounding country; settled organization of labour; clear proportion between labour and income. This is some distance from the blithe anarchy of "sell all thou hast . . ." and "take no thought for the morrow." But if Jesus has been left behind, Paul, too, has been kept in abeyance.

The Church attempted to match the moral directives of religion with the claims of society. This may seem shamefully pragmatic until one realizes that the Church had to work with the world as it was, not as it might be. For instance, it was clear that most people were sinners and all had sinned at one time or another. Therefore Paul's doctrine of original sin had to be tempered somewhat: it proved necessary to open the door to genuine repentance. Possibly the door was left open too wide. Quite arguably confession should have been permitted, as in the days before Innocent III, rather than enjoined. There was a possibility that the sinner's room for manoeuvre was in danger of broadening into a pathway so wide as to bewilder all sense of direction.

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This, understandably, was the issue which split the Church in the Age of Reform. We can have every sympathy with Martin Luther nailing his theses on the church door at Wittenberg, especially when we remember that these were not assertions of dogma but invitations to debate. Which of our modern Romanists could fail to agree with Luther's general stand against indulgences? No one is now going to argue that the Pope has power to bestow a remission of punishment upon souls in purgatory. What Luther tried to do was prevent the leaders of the Church from assuming powers which, properly speaking, belong to God. Nothing in Luther's early teaching excludes him from the general body of doctrine. As late as 1518 he was counted as a loyal Catholic. However he was also a critical one, prepared to assert that any man-made interpretation of Christ could err; including those of the Pope and General Council. This in itself goes no farther than Occam, d'Ailly and Tudescho, all of whom made their criticisms from within the Church. It was most likely the manner rather than the matter of Luther's proceeding that caused the rift; the personal clash with the Papal Legate in Augsburg, himself backed by secular pressure from the Emperor. Left to himself, it is quite unlikely that Brother Martin would have seceded from the Church.

In many ways it is a pity that he did. The ambiguity of Jesus' teaching had for many years given rise to personal extrapolations and consequent dissention. But the Counter-Reformation was to show that there was in the Church no abuse incapable of being purged without schism. Nevertheless the Papal anathema against Luther and his defiant reply sparked off the immanent spirit of Reform. To us it is surprising how many different sects appeared, as hot against each other as against their parent Church. One thinks not only of Luther in Wittenberg but of Bucer in Strasbourg and Zwingli in Zürich. The most powerful of these Reformers was John Calvin, who finally took his stand in Geneva.

Originally Calvin was a man of letters and a humanist. This meant he set some value on human culture and potentiality. But after a sudden conversion—1533 is the date usually given—Calvin took a line which was diametrically opposed to this. Insofar as it derives from anywhere his creed seems to be an extension of Paul to logical extremes with some blacker aspects of the Old Testa-

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ment thrown in for good measure. It centres and turns upon the doctrine of Predestination: a marginal matter in St. Augustine, a special application of Providence in Aquinas, but taken as his central dogma by Calvin. The result is a religion having little to do with Christianity and indeed unlike any that was ever taught before.

The imagery of Jesus is full of reverence for life. We think of the prodigal son welcomed home by his father, the shepherd rejoicing over the recovered lamb, the labourers being paid at the end of their day in the vineyard, the wounded traveller being helped by an alien. Calvin's teaching is very different. His world is redolent of mouths filled with poison, throats like open sepulchres, hands foul with murder, breasts full of hydras, bloody feet, rotten flesh, stinking flesh, flesh utterly and irrevocably corrupt.

It is the distinction of Jesus to bring the common people into the centre of his teaching. He showed the dignity of fishermen, husbandmen and housewives in their daily work. Calvin's imagery turns them into diseased corpses, horribly disfigured.

Before Calvin every religion kept open some avenue of escape for the sinner. Nothing is so unproductive as despair. Therefore repentance plays a crucial part in Judaism as well as in the Catholic Church. Even Paul recognized the intercession of the Cross.

Not so Calvinism: the doctrine runs something like this. God foreknew, and so forewilled, the disobedience of Adam in eating the forbidden fruit. Yet it was in Adam's nature to fall, for he was giving way to the lusts endemic in human flesh. So we all fell with Adam and are equally condemned to everlasting damnation.

But Adam's evil will could be used to God's good end, because He allowed his Son to intercede for us. Since man is too vile to penetrate to God, God Himself took on the corrupt flesh of man and exhibited the supreme act of obedience—on the Cross. The Crucifixion cannot alter our corrupt condition, but it showed that man could be, in certain circumstances, capable of grace.

These circumstances cannot be brought about by any volition on our part, for God's predestinated will cannot be altered by man's actions. Further, we are so fallen that no act of ours can find merit in God's eyes. Even the supreme moments of saints and martyrs are tainted by their previous sins. It is by God's will, not by their deeds, that they find grace and so become of the Elect who are to be saved.

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"While we all labour naturally under the same disease, those only recover health to whom the Lord is pleased to put forth his healing hand. The others whom, in just judgment, he passes over, pine and rot away till they are consumed." Since all deserve damnation, it shows God merciful even to pluck a few brands from the fire. It is useless to argue on what principle the choice is made. Election takes place as a result of God's primordial will: of necessity, this is inscrutable.

But in His mercy God has revealed some part of Himself to mankind. Not in His earthly works, for our dullness prevents our looking beyond the material world to its Creator. And not in our own instincts, for even if a seed of religion were planted in us we are too corrupt for it to mature. Rather, knowledge of God can come only through the Scriptures. Sometimes, indeed, they are obscure, especially to those who are not of the Elect. But it is the duty of those who have received illumination in such matters to assist the less fortunate. And this, in its turn, involves a double suspension of the will. We have, first of all, to believe rather than act, since our fate is predestined. We have, moreover, to subjugate our reason to the demands of Scripture; and if we find the Scriptures obscure, we have always Calvin, or his representative, to expound them to us.

So that, at the same time as Calvin counsels the subjugation of our will, he is exalting his own. It is not a vacuum that he advocates so much as an assault upon the personality. In emptying our minds, he fills them with himself. And since every work demands exposition, the Scriptures included, Calvin can at once tell us to remain passive before God's word and at the same time give us his own version of what that word amounts to.

This matters a great deal because Calvin invariably gives highly subjective interpretations of his chosen texts. In his commentary upon St. John's Gospel he discusses this: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof: but thou knowest not whence it cometh, nor wither it goest: so is everyone that is begotten of the spirit." The most obvious reading of this would be as an instance of free will: the wind seems unaccountable and wayward. But Calvin, bound in an inflexible system, has to make the world inflexible, too. So he relates the wind to the inexorable power of God. According to Calvin, it

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seems wayward simply because man cannot understand the mind of his Creator.

Unlike any of the seminal minds in Western Civilization, Calvin was a poor literary critic. This meant that he had difficulty in understanding a statement unless he rewrote it in his own terms. Since these terms bordered on the pathological, it is clear that the bias put upon the Scriptures by Calvin is not only personal but tending strongly in an anti-social direction. This is serious in a religion that claims to be based upon interpretation of the Scriptures. In effect, Calvin is seeking to impose his private neurosis on the public at large. That is why it is important for him to make his religion ostensibly impersonal.

In fact it is one of the most personal religions that ever existed: very much the projection of one man's character. Calvin rests his whole case in the will of God, at the same time claiming that the will of God is inscrutable. If we ask why a particular event has occurred, Calvin can reprove us for seeking to understand God's will. Therefore his religion is clear-cut in directive, arbitrary in motivation.

This has caused an extraordinary amount of unhappiness. Everything of the flesh is separated from God by an unbridgeable gulf. Each mortal man deserves only death and will receive it, unless God has decreed otherwise for the glorification of His majesty. Max Weber's comment seems relevant:

> The Father in Heaven of the New Testament, so human and understanding, who rejoices over the repentance of a sinner as a woman over the lost piece of silver she has found, is gone. His place is taken by a transcendental being, beyond the reach of human understanding, who with his quite incomprehensible decree has decided the fate of every individual and regulated the tiniest details of the cosmos from eternity. . . . In its extreme inhumanity the doctrine must above all have had one consequence for the life of a generation which surrendered to its magnificent consistency. That was a feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual.

Calvinism strikes at the roots of the confidence which must grow if we are ever to attain the stature of adult beings. Instead of developing the young idea, Calvin beats it back into a cave of despair at its own unworthiness. He plays upon the guilt about the body common among adolescents; in this way ensuring their delayed maturity. And even the achieved adult is not safe. Cal-

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vin's creed came to fruition at the same time as syphilis began to spread over Europe. Thus he utilizes not only the youth's fear of sex but the grown man's fear of disease. In this way Calvin kept his people in subjection.

It is not God they were subject to but a perversion of the Scriptures by one man and his followers. In obeying Calvin's counsel and suspending their reason in favour of his, they were allowing him unwarrantable control over their instincts. And this promotes distortion not only of the layman but of the minister. The man who believes above all else in obeying the will of God is capable of turning the world upside down, provided only that he is sure of himself as an instrument of that will.

This is the dynamic of tyrants the world over. No tyrant can gain power without a mystical confidence in the forces behind him. And he cannot know he has power until he has compelled upon people restrictions of liberty such as they would never seek of their own free will. The energies that drove man through and out of the jungle have to find vent somewhere. In tyrants they concentrate themselves into a species of willed sadism.

Fortunately for the world, the sphere of action Calvin himself inhabited was limited in scope. Effectively, he was confined to Geneva—which, in the middle of the sixteenth century, had not more than sixteen thousand inhabitants. In spite of this, the Calvinists managed to burn fifty-eight of them between 1542 and 1546 alone. This is worse slaughter *per capita* than the unreformed Church of the Borgias. Calvin made his City of God a City of Gloom. Singing and dancing were crimes. Food and dress were governed by the elders of the church. Thirty-one people were burned for spreading the plague. A child was beheaded for striking its parents. And crimes against Calvin came into a special category. Laughing at or disagreeing with his sermons was serious; engaging with him in controversy could be fatal. An opponent called Gruet was tortured for three years and finally executed. Another, Servetus, was seized for heresy and burnt. The laws of Geneva had no jurisdiction over him; he was merely passing through. His crime was to have fallen out with Calvin some years before in Paris.

The man who accomplished feats such as these would have been an extraordinary force for evil on a larger stage. Calvinism

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demands action: the counsellors of subjugation require material that can be subjugated.

But it is not every country that will permit Calvinism to operate at its fullest scope. It appears necessary to have a bifurcated community, a deep fissure between competing peoples. More, Calvinism flourishes best where there are geographical difficulties, and where the political position of the country has been unstable for some years.

In its earlier years, North America was a profitable field for action. The Puritans persecuted the Quakers unmercifully and made themselves a name as witchhunters. But waves of immigrants and the extension of the border westward made life more difficult for them. There are still traces of Calvinist influence in the irrational and associative mode of American poetry, from Emerson, through his disciple Whitman, to Eliot, Pound and Crane; a phenomenon wrongly termed "modernism." The passivity of these poets in the face of emotional montage is the late development of a tradition favouring a will afloat in a deterministic universe. But, with the exception of such stumbling-blocks as the so-called Bible belt and the Bob Jones University, one could not call the United States as a whole Calvinist.

An example more salient to the modern mind is that of South Africa. The Dutch Reformed Church has no difficulty in sorting out the Elect from the Reprobate. The former are white, the latter black. But the matter is so clear-cut that I do not propose to treat it in depth.

Scotland is the most remarkable example of Calvinism in action: a country taken over and virtually beaten into the ground by one creed. But it must be said that Scotland was open to such influence. It has always been geographically straggling, underpopulated and under-privileged. Its soil is notoriously poor. Its weather is deplorable. If we try to explain its passivity before Calvinism in terms of history, the first thing to be said is that, strictly speaking, Scotland has no history; just a succession of events.

The country has never been wholly stable. In the earlier Middle Ages it combined four incompatible peoples: Picts, Scots, Britons and Angles. Though Scotland was formally united by Malcolm II in 1034, there were still areas of independence; most notably

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in the Highlands, many of whose people are a distinctive race to this day. Malcolm and his successors were handicapped by bad communications in a difficult terrain. They had to withstand repeated invasions by Norway and Orkney and encroachment from the Angles, Britons and Danes coming up from the Border. When England itself became unified under the Conqueror, it only meant that encroachment was to that extent more directed. Scottish kings were always more or less vassals to their English counterparts. There was not even peace within the Scottish dominion. Each king was beset by some rival claimant to his throne, by internecine broils between over-mighty barons. Not until the reign of Robert II (1371) did the hereditary principle assert itself. And even this did little good: the Scottish Royal Family were more than usually prone to dynastic accidents. Of six successive kings, from Robert III to James V, not one died a natural death. Moreover the first five James's all succeeded as minors. That meant there was opportunity of self-aggrandisement by the nobles limited only by Regents of varying degrees of ability. Alliances vacillated uneasily between France on the one hand and England on the other. When the former came too close in orbit, the latter exploded into war.

In the teeth of such instability one could hardly expect anything resembling civilization. Yet, in the reign of James IV, Scotland had its creative moment. In one sense or another it has lived on it ever since.

James IV got off to a propitious start in 1488. Unlike most of his predecessors, his claim to the throne was not disputed. The barons who had murdered his father parcelled out among themselves the great offices of state and passed a motion—the first recorded from a Scottish parliament—blaming their former king for the troubles of his time. Though James IV had pardoned these barons, he took the further precaution of developing the machinery of government together with a standing army. This gave the country sufficient equilibrium to allow for development; the arts are an index to this.

Obviously Scotland could not boast a leisured class with cultivated interests. But printing was introduced into the country in the reign of James IV; and under him, too, three of the country's great writers flourished: Douglas, Henryson and Dunbar.

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The last of these was Poet Laureate. True, he cursed the court up and down, especially when it delayed in translating him to a benefice. He also denounced Edinburgh for its stink while praising London for its clean, clear river! But he did so in a language of astonishing vigour. Therefore any understanding of Scotland's lost potential must come from Dunbar. He, far more than Burns, is the national poet; the one who used Scots to the full range of its resources. The melodrama, satire and nightmarish fantasy of his best poems flicker down the centuries. No wonder Scotland was ripe for the Calvinist flames. The presence of Henryson's *Cresseid* and Douglas's translation of the *Aeneid* in the same ambience shows that the achievement is not simply that of the individual genius. At this period Scotland attained its maximum stability. European connections were at their strongest: alliances were struck up with Spain, Denmark, Venice, and, especially, France.

It was this last that, as could have been expected, brought about a worsening of relations with England. The ensuing war ended on the field of Flodden with the decimation of the Scots nobility, including James himself. Scotland was never the same again. In particular it forfeited all hope of independence.

So thinly populated and infertile a country never could have stood entirely alone. Two courses remained open: either continuance in the Catholic tradition and eventual alliance with France, or the embracement of reform and alliance with England. It was the advent of John Knox that brought Scotland into the English fold and bound up her history with the history of Reform. And it was the Scottish barons that called him over from Geneva.

It would have been too much to expect the austere Calvin not to have a grotesque camp-follower. Jesus had Paul, Lenin had Stalin, Freud had Groddeck, Churchill had Beaverbrook. Even Prospero had Caliban—"Beat him enough; after a little time/I'll beat him too." If Luther is the conductor of the New Reformed Orchestra and Calvin its first violin, John Knox can best be described as the tone-deaf kettle-drummer, hopelessly out of time with the angelic music.

Everything Knox did was uncouth, rude, unmannerly. His theology was virtually identical with that of his master and may

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be found in his tract on Predestination. All the familiar properties are there—exaltation of the importance of the devil, damnation of the non-elect, original sin, God's inscrutable will. But whereas Calvin wrote in detached Latin, Knox ground out an obsessionally repetitive English prose.

Knox was not, then, an original theologian. He wasn't a very discerning politician either. His *First Blast against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* was ill-timed. It alienated Elizabeth I on her accession to the English throne and it embarrassed Calvin under whose auspices it claimed to appear. To say the least its attitude is pathological. Of women Knox says, "Their sight in civil regiment is but blindness; their strength weakness; their counsel, foolishness; and their judgment, frenzy, if it be rightly considered . . . "Apparently the two punishments laid upon woman as a result of Eve's sin are the anguish of childbirth and the subjection of her appetites to those of her husband. Even the imagery is pathological: "From a corrupt and venomed fountain can spring no wholesome water." It tells us more about Knox than about the opposite sex.

It is odd that Knox should have had so low an opinion of women in an age when there were a number of exceptionally able queens. But Knox was far more at the mercy of his emotions than the women whom he castigates. Almost everything he wrote reeks of self-justification at the expense of perceptiveness. His History of the Reformation in Scotland is largely a recounting of anecdotes very much to his own credit. Yet this was the man whom the disaffected Scots nobles chose to contend with Mary of Guise, later to confront Mary Stuart, and all the time to conduct an alliance with Elizabeth of England.

All things considered, Knox was amazingly successful. In many ways the Church had played into his hands. James V and his queen, Mary of Guise, encouraged the bishops to proceed against heretics. The burning of Patrick Hamilton in 1524 provided Scottish reform with its first martyr. Any chance of James V putting his own house in order ended with his death and the succession of the infant Mary Stuart. But the Queen Regent, as his widow became, was a resourceful woman who saw her policy as the eventual union of the Scottish and French crowns. To this end she affianced Mary Stuart to the equally young Dauphin

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of France. Had matters been left to her, the union of the realm would have given Scotland the European connections it badly needed as a bulwark against England.

At this point the Protestant Lords of the Congregation stepped in. Their aim, like their baronial counterparts in previous reigns, was power. They used the cry of Reform to lend a moral glaze to their proceeding. In John Knox they recognized a man of unquestioned sincerity with a genuinely popular touch lacking in themselves. And, once they had convinced Knox that every step against Mary of Guise brought Scotland nearer Calvin's City of God, he became their mouthpiece and rabble-rouser.

Knox arrived in Scotland in 1559. Within weeks of his return the country was in turmoil. He began by preaching at Perth a sermon against idolatry. The abbey and monasteries were promptly smashed. The brethren and town hooligans were next moved to burn down the abbey at Lindores and the palace at Scone. Finally they moved on to Edinburgh. By the time they had finished there, the churches had nothing left but their walls. Knox was unmoved—"we were the less troubled in putting order to such places."

Whatever Knox did had to be right because he was the minister of God's providence in Scotland. He had a vengeance to exact —"wherefore did Master Patrick Hamilton die?" But the opposite of proscribing Protestants is not to proscribe Catholics; surely, the opposite of any kind of proscription is tolerance. The word, however, does not occur in Knox's vocabulary. Priests were sacked; the celebration of mass forbidden. Before long Scotland was in a state of civil war.

The Queen Regent operated from Leith with the help of French reinforcements. The Lords of the Congregation operated mainly from Stirling, and the intervention of the English fleet on their behalf effectively left them in charge. Negotiations were concluded with the English and the defeated Mary of Guise retired to neutral Edinburgh Castle. There she died. After her death Leith capitulated and this more or less ended French power in Scotland. It meant that authority was now in the hands of the Protestants. Though there were outposts of resistance, most notably in the Western Highlands, Scotland as a whole accepted the deterministic system of Calvin with its doctrine of justification

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by faith. The Calvinistic ministers arrogated to themselves the right to govern matters of public as well as private life. Cecil's agent in Scotland wrote to his master at the court of Elizabeth: "John Knox thundereth out of the pulpit, so that I fear nothing so much as that one day he will mar all. He ruleth the roast, and of him all men stand in fear." It seemed that the Lords of the Congregation had created a scourge for the people they could not altogether control.

It was into this situation that Mary Stuart disembarked at Leith in 1561. Her young husband had died in France and she had returned to govern Scotland.

But "govern" was not the right word. It did not take Mary long to find herself in active conflict with the Scottish Reformation. Knox managed to create a riot at the first mass celebrated in her presence after her arrival. And from his own pulpit he denounced her as a Papist—one mass "was more fearful to him than if ten thousand enemies were landed in any part of the realm of purpose to suppress the whole religion."

Naturally Mary sent for Knox. But, instead of explaining himself, he berated her for being ignorant and priest-ridden—"Have you heard any teach but such as the Pope and Cardinals have allowed? You may be assured that such will speak nothing to offend their own estate." But this is the familiar Calvinist paradox. Would Knox speak anything to offend *his* own estate? If not, all teaching is biased in the direction of whichever personality happens to be voicing it. When Knox counselled Mary to accept as her standard God's word in the Scriptures, he was also telling her that she must accept his definition of that word.

The definition was a biased one. Mary's dancing and singing, her masques and entertainments, were all anathema to the Calvinists. They roused the mob to burn her in effigy and the magistrates to proscribe her followers, while the preachers themselves fulminated against her from the pulpit.

Even so, Mary was adroit enough to drive a wedge between the preachers and the Lords of the Congregation. The latter, having seized many valuable abbey and monastery lands, were reluctant to give them up. It was for spoils such as these, rather than the upkeep of ministers, that they had waged their war of reform. The nobles divided up the ecclesiastical revenues with the Queen,

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leaving only a moiety for the preachers. Knox was furious. "For first I see two parts truly given to the devil, and the third to be divided between God and the devil. Ere long the devil shall have three parts of the third, and judge you then what God's portion shall be."

Unfortunately Mary's character was not up to the claims of her intellect. Time and time again, when she had the Calvinists cornered, the claims of her body betrayed her. There is nothing particularly shocking about this: politicians have held high office who lived more spectacular private lives than Mary Stuart. But her amours gave the Calvinists weapons which they did not hesitate to use against her.

Mary's marriage to Henry Darnley was turned into a public scandal to shock the mob. Knox celebrated the royal alliance by preaching a sermon on the text "O Lord, other Lords than thou have ruled over us," in which Darnley was identified with Ahab and Mary with Jezebel. In any case, the marriage did not prove a success. The lazy, drunken, violent Darnley was ill-equipped to please either the Queen or her people. Eventually he was murdered. Mary might have survived this event since the people had come to hate Darnley far worse than his Queen, but she capped the whole business by marrying Bothwell, who was widely suspected of having arranged Darnley's assassination. Such acts as these turned the most faithful of Mary's nobles against her, let alone the Knox-inspired mob. She was imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle to cries of "Burn the hoor!" And in daily thunderings from his pulpit Knox demanded the execution of Mary as a murderess and adulteress.

The nobles were afraid in case Knox roused the mob to uncontrollable insurrection. It may be that, in order to reduce the public temperature, some of them connived at Mary's escape. However that may be, eventually Mary threw herself on the mercy of her royal cousin of England; and was promptly imprisoned. There was no chance of Scotland accepting her back; no chance, either, of so likely a claimant to the throne of Elizabeth being allowed to cavort at large. So the wretched Mary languished, an illustrious captive, for eighteen years; to be executed on dubious grounds by a warrant from a commission not empowered to try her.

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It would be a mistake to reproach Mary, as the Calvinists did, in terms of adultery and fornication. Her love of music and masque implied a civilization more sophisticated than anything that had so far taken place in Scotland. Out of those palace entertainments might have come, for example, a drama: Scotland is almost the only European country never to have evolved one. And the consequent limitation of speech and social context has made for an impoverishment of spirit that besets the country even today. Moreover, speaking diplomatically, the deposition of Mary was the deposition of those wider connections of which every country stands in need if it is not to be hopelessly inbred. Her fall may be said to have removed any way Scotland might have escaped from insularity. This is, too, a political matter. It was not to the interests of England to allow parallel development in Scotland. James VI of Scotland was in tutelage and his successors were far more Kings of England than of the country whence they had sprung. So Scotland became a fief, and one with little inherent interest. Italy had Michelangelo, Raphael, Leonardo, Titian, Petrarch; France had Ronsard and the Pleiades; England had Wyatt, Donne, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, Tallis, Byrd. All Scotland had was John Knox.

Knox even managed to impoverish the language by writing his influential *History of the Reformation* in English. Henceforward conceptual prose ceased to be written in Scots. This meant that the Scots were unable to think in their own language. Indeed the language remains the medium for lyrics and ballads—forms with very little intellectual content. But history, philosophy, theology, criticism, all were written in a thinner version of the Southern English. The dichotomy persists to this day: analytic chop-logic and cold reason subsisting alongside emotive song-lyric and irrational passion. The modern Scotsman is bifurcated, at odds within himself. His thinking has nothing to say to his feeling.

This can be seen, at large, in the Scottish universities. Despite their claims to medieval foundation these are essentially institutions of the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. They could not get under way until the Covenanting issues had been settled and the Protestant succession had been guaranteed. In such an ethos they developed a style of their own which has little bearing on serious work in the arts. Great numbers of unrelated

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facts are crammed into the students with scant regard for selectivity. There is no co-ordination between the various fields of thought. Students hunt from lecture to lecture without achieving anything like a synthesis. This is what Scottish academics call "broad general education" or "academic diversification." I should prefer to call it a hotch-potch.

To embrace a range of disciplines it is necessary first to master one. Otherwise the student will not know what a discipline entails. But the honours schools in Scottish universities are a thin foam upon the tide of general students surging through classrooms and emerging decked with the flotsam of unassimilated knowledge.

Nor is there any appeal from the educational system to the scholastic environment. The students exist in a vacuum. Far from engaging in traditional undergraduate activities outside the classroom, the student's life centres on "home"; a suburb or dormitory town with its contingent church and table tennis club. Very few Scottish students dream of going anywhere but to the local university where their teacher went before them. They continue to live with their parents and so unnaturally prolong adolescence into adult life. The opportunity to make social contacts for themselves passes them by. And when, finally, they graduate, they will get jobs as schoolteachers or ministers, still in their own area, still under the family sway. The cycle continues when their own pupils and parishioners go up to the same university and leave in order to instruct others to go up in their turn. The process has continuity and logic, but we need not call it education.

Such insularity breeds contempt for disinterested study and research. There is often a paucity of evidence for the "scholarship" of professors in Scotland: too little is happening on the creative front. It could be argued that such men need all their energy for teaching. But I cannot see that nine hours a week five months of the year constitutes a full-time job. Moreover if the concept of the "teaching university" has any validity, it is that of an institution whose purpose is to confer degrees upon its students. Such downgrading might be welcome to tycoons or politicians, because it would be a neat way of showing which young people deserved to earn a living. And no one would deny that useful arts are all very well in their way. The difficulty is that in the long run one never knows what is going to be useful. The University of Padua preferred the practical facts of theology

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to the cloud-cuckoo-land of astronomy; unfortunately, the lecturer in the latter faculty was Galileo.

At university level the only standard that can be instituted is that of disinterested research. It is not one that has been much appreciated in Scotland. A respected professor of the nineteenth century, George Sinclair, wrote treatises on mathematics, hydrostatics, astronomy, navigation, coal and Calvinism. Practical enough, in all conscience, except that the last was plagiarized. However I cannot find that this later circumstance lost him any respect. Any more than, in fact, his modern counterpart would lose face because under the pretext of teaching he had never succeeded in publishing anything at all.

This mixture of philistinism and dishonesty under the mask of virtue is endemic in the Scottish universities. Adam Smith is the archetype of Scottish academics. His doctrines of self-interest and of natural liberty appear to condone passivity; in fact they countenance anti-social behaviour. If we yield to the self-interest of butcher or baker, are we not thereby putting ourselves in pawn? If we allow prices and wages to find their "natural" level, are we not giving free play to the profiteer, rack-rentier, entrepreneur? The social and economic philosophy that has governed the Scottish universities for centuries seems to me as much an extension of Calvinism as a related development, that of technology. Indeed, we have an apt analogy here. The predictable movement of Watt's piston, the motion of Stephenson's steam engine along predetermined tracks, are more striking manifestations of Calvinism in practice than any you will find in art. The capacity to excavate cuttings, drive roads and throw bridges over rivers, regardless of the direction in which these are tending, again is revelatory of the Scottish consciousness. And the yielding to blind profit motives regardless of social consequence is part of the tradition that made Scotland what it is today.

The Industrial Revolution was allowed to sacrifice amenity, ostensibly in the name of progress. It was the ultimate in *laissez faire*. But development in technology must be controlled and directed if the machines are not to finish up working the men. As it was, the excavation of the Clyde basin brought in floods of immigrants which the authorities were unable to house. Tenements were run up and people packed into them until Glasgow became the most overcrowded city in Europe: a place created with

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regard only to the needs of the shipbuilders and jerrybuilders. In a matter of years it turned from the garden city celebrated by Defoe to a conglomerate shanty-town without shape or meaning. Aggression spread; so did disease; until a situation grew up that nobody could control.

It is no good maintaining that Glasgow is not typical of Scotland. One knows perfectly well that there are pockets of resistance in the Highlands. The same pockets resisted John Knox in 1559; yet Scotland still became Calvinist. In default of Edinburgh ever being a political capital, Glasgow is bound to assume commercial and industrial ascendancy over the rest of Scotland. As such it sets the tone.

A harsh and discordant tone it is, too. Glasgow runs largely on mob law, and this, in its turn, is based on the protection racket. In return for being left alone a shopkeeper pays a levy to his local gang. One Italian fish-and-chip shop owner held out while his shop was repeatedly looted and customers terrified. Eventually he retired, ruined. Curiously enough, his neighbours blamed him for standing out and drawing the attention of the police to the area.

The main gangs are the Tongs, the Fleet, the Monks and the Cumbie. They appear to radiate outwards, from a closely defined centre to a fluctuating membership at the extremities. Membership goes more by area than by religion or nationality. This is natural if the financial basis is the "protection" of shopkeepers and café proprietors, and it gives rise to many territorial disputes.

What is so puzzling about Glasgow violence is that a good deal of it is not attached to profit motive at all. It is quite possible for a youth at a dance hall to be bluffed into a fight. Or a passer-by may fall victim to a chance slash or blow.

Therefore the gangs are an expression of inner violence. Partly this is a result of primitive instincts given no training or outlet. Partly it is caused by the overcrowding consequent upon the creation of an industrial city in a place where there was no room for it. Yet another factor may very well be sex.

The lowest class of girls in Glasgow used to be factory-workers and were called, in the plural, "the Wee Hairy"—presumably because, in the 1920's, they wore their hair longer than the fashion, though other reasons suggest themselves as well. Their modern counterpart is still at school, but it is experienced in all things and discusses them on tops of buses with an abandon

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calculated to astonish the middle-class or the middle-aged. These attach themselves to the outskirts of gangs or else are monopolized by individual youths early in their puberty; therefore it does not seem that there is enough of "the wee hairy" to go round.

More gently bred girls are warned from their earliest years never to frequent public dances, public houses, or, indeed, to wander about the town; and one can see why. Unfortunately this exacerbates an already intolerable situation, and the town youths are liable to behave in an anti-social fashion if they see a girl, with or without an escort.

With girls a scarce commodity on the market, the young male is pretty well bound to sublimate his energy in other directions. Apart from violence, the favourite sublimation is drink.

It is probably true to say that Scotland as a whole numbers more teetotalers per head than any other country; it also has more alcoholics. Now the Scottish bar is nothing like its equivalent in England. It exists solely as a means of consuming alcohol. By 7 or 8 p.m.—earlier on Friday and Saturday—it is packed out. Conversation is discouraged because there is much beer and whisky to be got through if one is to be sufficiently drunk at closing time which is at 10. This in itself is a notional puritanism: the feeling appears to be that, if the bars stayed open late, nobody would get to work next morning. Towards closing time one or the other of two things happen. Either people have drunk so much that they are in a very ugly condition indeed—it is at closing time that most of the violence breaks out—or else they acquire what in Scots phrase is called a "carry-oot." That is to say, liquor is purchased for consumption off the premises.

Sometimes the group in question will go to a Chinese or Indian restaurant—those being the only ones open at such a time—and order some kind of a meal as a pretext for drinking their liquor there. This is a trial to diners and proprietors alike, but the latter suffer damage and broken glass for the sake of trade; besides, it would be difficult to repel such ugly customers. Sometimes the scene of activity is somebody's home or flat. In either case there is a haunted and frenetic air about Scottish drinking which makes it unlike any that I have observed elsewhere. It is as though they were drinking against time and also against their fellows—not sharing a glass but competing for it. Of course if one is cautioned against drink from an early age, no amount of subsequent imbib-

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ing will take away from its association with forbidden fruit. At the same time, over-indulgence will be a guilt-ridden process to be got through with as little pleasure as possible.

So far I have been describing what might be called the working classes. But the middle classes are equally clannish and hard to penetrate. Their system, though, works in a quite different way.

Such celebrations as these Scots have take place at home. Home, indeed, is to the professional man what drink is to his manual counterpart; an excuse from doing anything constructive or creative. There can be no doubt that the Cottar's Saturday Night stretches on: television provides a good excuse for getting the family to stay indoors. If the family circle is extended somewhat, it will be for a cousin, an aunt or similar relative. The stranger may be told "you *must* come round," but, having accepted this hypothetical gesture, he is left in the air: an invitation is seldom ratified. Possibly the appearance of a stranger at the family hearth would be disruptive: conversation *en famille* appears to consist of a tissue of allusions to relatives and acquaintances too intimate for transmission.

The time to see the family in action is at a Scottish wedding. This is something in the nature of a ritual sacrifice. It may well be achieved in the teeth of the young couple chiefly concerned. Modern youth does not always want a white wedding staged in church with a reception and speeches to follow; but this is usually what it gets. The dominant figure is the minister who—Scots insularity being what it is—may very well have married the bride's parents, christened the bride, prepared her for confirmation—in short, seen her grow up. This might seem appropriate in the days when women were chattels chained to the kitchen sink; but it will hardly do now.

After the reception the company retires to the parents' home for tea. This is a great time for comparing notes on various relatives' progress or deterioration. There is much skirmishing between uncles and aunts—often in the Scottish vein of sarcasm which deprecates what it seems to commend. Gaiety and festivity are not usually much in evidence.

The Scottish family is what Dodie Smith has called "a dear octopus." It is difficult for a young Scots person to travel far without encountering second cousins and great aunts, all of whom exact their various obligations. The elder members of the family

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control events within its borders and relationships outside them are not encouraged.

The shy young Scots girl all too rapidly becomes the image of her middle-class mother: loud and overblown. The reason for this is probably another Scottish anathema: that on sex. A people who are convinced from their cradles that they are conceived in sin, born in corruption and doomed to damnation are hardly likely to be remarkable for their uninhibitedness. This makes for clumsy males and frightened females and eventually there is likely to be a fair amount of spare aggression floating around. The result is that the matron tends to be astonishingly forceful in conversation: her sexual disappointment impels her into a masculine rôle.

Along with this goes her need to substitute the children for the spouse. Hence, I think, the obsessive power that Scottish parents exert to keep their children by them. The well-brought-up child will go to the local school and the local college and be encouraged to marry the well-brought-up child next door.

Because the children are so trespassed against, they never have an existence independent of their families. Their parents tend to play the well-known psychological game of *Corner* whereby the child becomes an extension of themselves. Therefore much of what the parents would have liked to have done the child must do. This often amounts to an impossible ideal. Those without degrees want their child to get a degree; those with first degrees want their child to get a higher degree; and so on. The child's acquiescence is secured by a display of aggression on the part of parents: "the sacrifices we've made," "you can't let us down now," and the like. All this, as I have said, is the result of the parent's unfulfilled sexual need which attaches itself to the child as object.

Free discussion is discouraged, not only at home but in school. The good child is one who listens to what his parents tell him and who does it unquestioningly; in return he gets looked after, made comfortable, even pampered. The good pupil is one who writes down whatever his teacher tells him at school and regurgitates it in his examinations; in return he is allowed to pass, take his place at college, and, in his turn, become a parent and teacher. The process perpetuates itself.

Only those who have taught in Scottish universities can believe the pain, even sense of affront, with which the Good Chil-

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dren receive the news that they are expected to take part in active discussion. After a lifetime of emotional inhibition this is a difficult matter for them. But the tutor, especially if he is "foreign," can be ignored, or tolerated as a meaningless rung on the ladder to success.

There is a distinct feeling that attendance at grammar school and university should guarantee graduation, no matter how little interest the Good Child may have in his work; indeed, however little intelligence he may have. The Good Children are of the elect; faith, rather than works.

Meanwhile the Bad Children maraud around the streets hitting each other with shovels and hatchets, slashing each other with razors, in an imaginary war which is a self-contained cult of aggression against the environment in which they are so unlucky as to find themselves. It is seldom that Bad Children and Good Children meet; the latter don't really believe that the former exist.

So there are at least two nations in Scotland's biggest conurbation who have nothing to say to each other at all. Both, however, are overshadowed by the ghost of John Knox. The patron of the Good Children and their parents is the John Knox who was never tired of hammering away against the body, flesh, sex, women and anything else that came into his head. The patron of the Bad Children is the John Knox—it is really the same—who roused the mob to beat up Papists and burn down churches and indulge in senseless civil war.

The John Knox legacy can be seen in matters such as Sunday Observance. This means that most things shuttable are shut so that the Good Children go to church while the Bad Children perform prodigies of vandalism. It is an interesting fact that Calvinists not only want to spend Sunday in the observance of their religion but seek to compel everyone else to do likewise.

As I have implied there is a third estate, that of the Strangers. They may be professional people passing through, or colonies of Indian or Chinese connected with the catering trades. These mostly make friends within their own social group and lead a kind of shadow-life, behaving as though Scotland didn't exist.

Of intellectual community or social life at a serious level there is no trace in Glasgow and little in Edinburgh. As Hugh MacDiarmid wrote:

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> The cultural facilities for Scotland are comparatively beneath contempt. The ordinary amenities of civilized intercourse are almost entirely to seek. Edwin Muir could meet his intellectual equals in London, in Paris, in Salzburg, in Italy—but there are probably not a score of people between John o' Groats and Maidenkirk who do not stand culturally to him in the relation of the veriest country cousins.

This is because a great many of those who should have been intellectual leaders in Scotland, like Edwin Muir, fled elsewhere, afraid that Scottish philistinism would damage them. The Scottish intellectual at home eschews the free exchange of ideas. To voice a thought is to give away some part of one's personality: the Scottish mind, like the body assured it is vile, fears to be touched.

Scotland has had great men, but they have been thwarted at home or driven abroad. Were Hugh MacDiarmid or Edwin Muir ever offered Chairs at the Scottish universities? Yet these were men whose work, after much campaigning, now appears on their syllabuses of literature. And each in his own way exemplifies the fate of the Scottish artist: to operate in a cultural vacuum. MacDiarmid attempted to reconstruct a literary Scotland, basing his verse on the widest possible range of Scots idiom, bending it to incorporate the weight of reference so long absent from Scots literature. Muir was more a cosmopolitan man of letters and believed that the Scottish tradition should henceforward be couched in English.

It is not for me to act as arbiter between these two distinguished writers. Rather I should say that the fact such debates should arise shows the impoverishment of Scottish culture. Writers in other countries would not have such doubts about idiom or tradition. And, for better or worse, the younger poets have taken their cue from Muir rather than MacDiarmid, and write verse which is technically English. George Mackay Brown and Iain Crichton Smith produce landscape poetry; but I find the work of George MacBeth and D. M. Black more interesting in subject-matter. Significantly, these two are really part of the prose tradition running back to Stevenson and Hogg: the poetry of nightmare. But all four are talented, and it is no accident that they live, respectively, in Orkney, Oban, London and Japan. Scotland's literature exists on its environs. The intellectual power-

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centres boasted by other nations are not to be found in Edinburgh or Glasgow.

It can be seen, then, that Calvinism blasted Scotland to the core: theologically, politically, socially, culturally. If some leaves still flourish on the crippled trunk, this only shows how fragmentated the Scottish experience is. This matter extends far beyond the misfortunes of one small country. One should never attempt to separate national character from the history of ideas; though it must be admitted that character often biases to one ideology rather than another. Some nations burgeon to factitious greatness unsupported by real power and efficiency; I am thinking here of Nazi Germany. Some, like Russia, grow in inexorable stealth to menace the Western World. But some are bound in with their hatreds, kept small by the meanness of the ethos that fostered them. Here one thinks at once of the bitterness and of the insularity of Calvin's City of God; Knox's Edinburgh; Cotton Mather's New England; Vorster's South Africa; Paisley's Northern Ireland. It is present as a destructive element in Cromwell's Puritanism and Wesley's Methodism; neither remarkable for their aesthetic qualities. It would seem that, whenever you find Calvinism, you find an impoverishment of human experience.

I have already pointed out that the Roman Church erred on the side of tolerance towards backsliding sinners. Temptation, sin, repentance, absolution, temptation and sin once again formed a kind of Catholic life cycle. Luther made it harder to obtain forgiveness, but there is no question that it was possible. The *gratia amissibilis* could be regained through penitent contrition. Even this was ungrateful to Calvinism. But the rock upon which the reforming creeds split asunder was Luther's asseveration that it was possible to fall from a state of grace. Lutheranism was primarily concerned with the welfare of the individual and the maintenance of his faith in God. As a result, it soon lost any social impetus it might have had. But Calvinism had properties that gave it peculiar energy in penetrating the social fabric of a nation.

For one thing, it is a very secular creed. The Calvinist cannot take the kind of interest a Catholic or Lutheran might in an after-life because he believes it to be predetermined. At the same time he cannot altogether deny the world, even though he believes it to be in a fallen state. True, for this reason he cannot, either,

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enjoy the world; but he can turn it to account or put it to advantage. It may, after all, act as an omen or sign of grace.

One of the fears besetting a Calvinist is whether or not he is one of the elect. It is true that he cannot influence his circumstances one way or the other, but it would be interesting for him to find out. Latent in the creed of Calvinism is the notion, deriving from Job, that God will take especial note of his own people. By a simple extension, many Calvinists took this to mean that a state of grace was best indicated by material prosperity.

This can be justified by the Calvinist belief that the world exists for the greater glory of God. Therefore it is incumbent upon Calvinists to create a community that will realize that glory by making use of the world to its fullest extent. Rather than equate the highest type of religious life with monastic discipline, as Luther and the Catholics did, Calvin demanded that the ascetic ideal infiltrate worldly life, whether suited to it or not, and so the spiritual aristocracy of the monastery gave way to the social aristocracy of the predestined saints of God outside in the world.

This amounts to an injunction to utilize every moment of time and all founts of energy. Sociability, talk, ease, laughter—activities not immediately utilitarian—are condemned. There is a stable tradition here from Calvin through Baxter and Franklin to the Utilitarians of the nineteenth century, and beyond. It is intimately bound up with the growth of capitalism.

There is a great difference between the medieval trader relying on accepted custom, and the busy entrepreneur concerned to expand markets and increase turnover. The difference is that between making a living and building a business. In practice it proved difficult to separate productive credit from gross acquisitiveness. So much of what was done could be represented as making a fair use of the world's resources. It could be felt, quite sincerely, that none of the activity was for personal interest: the capitalist was seen as steward of the gifts of God; as a good servant putting his talent out to use. Calvin himself condoned acquisitiveness and rejected the canonical veto upon usury. And so his followers were able to justify to their conscience modern forms of economic production. In brief, it was the duty of the Calvinist to grow rich.

Societies organized in this way do not necessarily prosper. Countries that have remained backward are characterized by the

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pursuit of selfish and short term interests. More is required of the capitalist than the desire to make money. Though it is natural for him to develop trade, his workpeople are likely to see it another way. They may seek more leisure; more pay; a slower rate of labour; or, as in peasant societies, they may simply want to conserve the traditional way of doing things. And it is difficult to attain maximum efficiency against the will of the people. Even the compulsion to save may prove inhibiting. To keep down overheads may be to propagate inefficiency; to economize on safety measures or the health of one's workpeople is to skirt total breakdown; while it is simply bad business to be slow in ordering replacements of goods or to treat one's customers brusquely. In one sense the creed of Calvin encouraged Capitalism because it impelled individuals to throw more impetus into their trade, but in another sense it acted as a check. There are elements in Capitalism that Calvin never allowed for. When vision, expertise, bonhomie, boldness, inventiveness are missing, the hard energy that is left as often as not proves a constriction. If this were not so, it would be axiomatic that all Calvinist countries would be rich.

One of the social consequences of Calvinism is a willed disregard of the lower classes, the very workpeople upon whom the Capitalist Fortress is built. Calvin accepted quite cheerfully the idea that there would always be rich and poor, and his followers used this as a further means of defining the Elect. If property was a sign of grace, then this other must be true: to be poverty-stricken was to be sinful. And to be unemployed was, of course, to lack the systematic character that Calvinism demands. So that in a way the Capitalist was enjoined to be heartless about the working man. Weber remarked,

> With the consciousness of standing in the fullness of God's grace and being visibly blessed by Him, the bourgeois business man could follow his pecuniary interests as he would and feel that he was fulfilling a duty in doing so. Finally, it gave him the comforting assurance that the unequal distribution of goods in this world was a special dispensation of Divine Providence, which in these differences, as in particular grace, pursued secret ends unknown to men.

But the Calvinists could get it both ways. Calvin himself had said that only when the masses were poor did they remain obe-

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dient to God, and Wesley echoed him in this. A comfortable doctrine: whereby the good man is improved by prosperity, and the bad man is improved by adversity. One can see how it opened the door to *laissez faire*.

Here, also, the Calvinists strike at the imagination. Would they have tolerated Jesus? He did no work that the Calvinists would account useful. Indeed in many ways he resembled the mendicant orders which Calvin and his successors tried to root out. Yet many of the great visionaries of the world would have given an unsatisfactory account of themselves to a tribunal administering (say) the British Poor Laws.

This can be taken analogically. Who is to assess what "work" is? Calvinism does not seem to recognize the value of instinct or intuition; and Calvinists all too often mistake activity for action. Any artist or poet will tell you that a good deal of the important work is done when apparently the mind is lying fallow. Surely it is the continuum between creative impulses that must be safeguarded. The busy 9 to 5 (or 8 to 6) computation of a day's labour has little reference to the world of the artist. The Calvinist assesses the appearance and loses the reality.

Ultimately what is wrong with Calvinism is the arrogance that condemns vast sections of humanity on arbitrary grounds and without hearing their defence. It is the "holier-than-thou" stance of the archetypal Pharisee. Most damaging to their cause, it is always the Elect who decide who the Elect are.

Of course we are all Elect in one sense or another. The operatic soprano might be no great shakes as a left back, and the best test pilot in the world might well be a poor ballet dancer. But this is only to say that we have various skills. Although different in our proclivities we are still equal beings.

One can say, too, that there is an Elect in any given area of activity: Grandmasters of chess, virtuoso conductors, film stars, Fellows of the Royal Society. Or, if one prefers to talk in terms of quality, it is possible to say that Bertrand Russell is a better philosopher than Colin Wilson, or F. R. Leavis a better critic than Harold Hobson—which, after all, is not to damn Wilson or Hobson to eternal punishment. On the contrary, we can give reasons for holding opinions such as these, and our adversaries can, if they wish, refute them. The process is called discussion.

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But no discussion can be held with a person who is convinced that some are irrevocably Elect and yet can give no reason for holding this belief other than a general conception of God's inscrutable will. Argument is purposeless against such surface definition, such underlying mugginess. No wonder that Calvinism discourages discussion.

Discussion could only reveal the contradictions in the system, its inflexible tyrannizing over all that is valuable in the human spirit, and the drastic effects, political as well as cultural, of its presence as a dominating factor.

One has to ask the Calvinist such questions as these. Why, to feel encouraged, do you have to discourage others? Why, to feel valuable, do you need to condemn others as valueless? And why, in order to feel saved, must you rejoice in the fact that others are damned?

St. Thomas Aquinas paid his audience the compliment of demonstrating his conviction that God exists. There is no equivalent for this in Calvin's *Institutio Christianae Religionis.* And one can see why. Were Calvin's God to be argued out as logically as that of St. Thomas, we would see that he has nothing to do with Christianity at all. We would see further, that here is a highly personal invention. This is the theologian as ventriloquist. Though Calvin behaved as though God were speaking through him, he does not explain how he *knows* God is speaking through him.

What inner need for reassurance drove Calvin to create this God we cannot know: the facts of his conversion remain obscure. But the need to dominate is widely enough shared to ensure no shortage of ministers for his creed. Those with anti-social tendencies may very well require divine sanction to force home their desires. More, such sanction is not only a crutch but also a weapon. The personality that cannot justify its motivation can extend its powers tremendously by believing in a personalized God like that of Calvin. In requiring others to prostrate themselves before that God, the Calvinist leaders are in fact demanding that they may themselves be worshipped. But no human sacrifice can give them the assurance they crave. Behind the supreme arrogance of Calvin's God is the paranoid posture of defence immortalized by Adler as the inferiority complex.

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RICHARD PEVEAR

Notes on the Cantos of Ezra Pound

> It is all one to me where I begin; for I shall come back there again in time.
>
> —Parmenides

I

THE LATEST VOLUME OF THE CANTOS *(Drafts and Fragments of Cantos CX-CXVII)* appeared in 1969, over fifty years after the poem was begun. In the meantime, many of Pound's most faithful readers have died, and many critics have lost heart. It has been easier to assume that the poem is not going anywhere than to wait for it to get there. And yet that is an error. Pound has lived through the composition of the Cantos; he has given the years of his maturity and of his old age to the poem, and this length of time has not been simply a mechanical succession of hours and years during which the work was done but a period of personalized, organic time, bound up with the existence of the poet. That period is coming to an end. The latest cantos are not a continuation of an endless, shapeless poem, nor are they a trailing off of inspiration and an admission of failure, though they might give reason to think so. They are the ordained end of the poem, towards which Pound has been working from the start. What they reveal was implicit in the poem all the time, but Pound had to live through everything in order to reach that end.

There is a feeling of wholeness in the Cantos that is very hard to explain. It may be, in part, that Pound's work represents a wide range of modulations of a single voice. But it is more than that. The difficulty of explanation comes, I think, from Pound's particular attentiveness to the existence (as opposed to the meaning) of poetry. What I mean by the existence of poetry can be partially explained by the way the image, as Pound has defined it, communicates: as opposed to the abstract statement, the image, like the metaphor, constantly recreates its perception. A fragment

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of narrative can work in the same way. It presents something, but what does it mean? Poetry can vary widely between the two poles of existence and meaning; Pound's work clearly tends towards image and embodiment.

In *Canto CXVI* there are two passages that contain a recognition that is central to the question of the poem's unity. First:

> And I am not a demigod,
> I cannot make it cohere.

And then:

> to "see again"
> the verb is "see," not "walk on"
> i.e. it coheres all right
> even if my notes do not cohere.

The first passage reflects back on the whole of the poem and reveals it as incoherent, a ruin. The second passage qualifies the first; here Pound reaffirms the poem, but seen in a new way. It is not immediately clear what he means in either passage. Pound's detractors would be quick to agree that the poem does not cohere; they have been saying nothing else for years. But the second passage asserts a different kind of coherence, the very wholeness, I think, that I find so hard to explain. The two passages are not really contradictory, and in order to see the unity of the Cantos we must accept both of them.

These three observations are my starting point: that the growth of the poem is closely bound up with the existence of the poet in time; that the poem is hard to "read" because of Pound's attentiveness to the existence of poetry in image and embodiment; and that these "notes" which are the Cantos stand in relation to the coherence of their vision as an image stands to the insight it embodies.

Pound's poetry has its source in "the noblest of the senses," the eyes. But for Pound, seeing is rich in implications: eyesight leads to insight, and clarity of perception is the basis for ethical life. He gives us the paradigm of these connections in *Canto LXXXI:*

> First came the seen, then thus the palpable
> Elysium, though it were in the halls of hell.

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Pound's intelligence is visual in its most fundamental instincts. Hence his theories of the image and the ideogram as forms of poetic expression, and the frequent analogy to sculpture in his writings about poetry. Sculpture has precisely the qualities Pound considers highest in art: solidity and clarity of embodiment. In sculpture, inward vision stands in the light. And in the imagery of the Cantos, nature is embodied in the light of the sun. Even in the smallest perceptions, it is the play of light that draws Pound's eye:

> The water-bug's mittens show on the bright rock
> below him.

To the Greeks, the light of the sun was the giver of true vision. The Greek word for truth, *aletheia,* means unveiling. In a lecture delivered in Munich in 1953, Heidegger spoke of the relationship in Greek art between *techne* (skill or production) and *aletheia*:

> Why did [art] bear the humble name of *techne*? Because it was a pro-ductive unveiling and was thus a form of *poiesis.* The name *poiesis* was finally given, as its proper name, to that unveiling which penetrates and rules all the art of the beautiful: poetry, the poetic object . . . .
>
> Poetry places truth in the shining-light of what Plato, in the *Phaedrus,* calls *to ekphanestaton,* that which resplends in the most pure way.

Poetry springs from the union of *techne* and *aletheia,* skill and revelation: from a moment of genesis in which light is both active and reserved, the light that penetrates into the truth of being, and the light that in its shining makes vision possible. Pound is a poet, not a thinker, but he suggests by brief quotations the thought that accompanies his poetic making. For instance, one line from the remains of Erigena's writings recurs in several of the later cantos: *Omnia quae sunt lumina sunt/* All things that are are lights.

> in the light of light is the virtù
> "sunt lumina" said Erigena Scotus.
> *(Canto LXXIV)*

And in *Canto XC,* the fragment: *Ubi amor ibi oculus est,* identifies light with love "which proceeds from the soul." *Amor,* the inner potency of light, desires no more than an abiding union

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with the light of the sun, it changes nothing. Erotic passion, on the other hand, is blind.

The realm of light in the Cantos is the natural world, the physical present. But not the momentary present that is continually being thrust into the past. It is a timeless moment, the mystical *nunc stans,* in which the present, become transparent, is one with the "sun-warmed earth" of Odysseus' homecoming, the well-ordered kingdom of Confucius, the earthly paradise Virgil describes to Dante in the *Purgatorio*:

> *Vedi lo sol che in fronte ti riluce;*
> *vedi l'erbetta, i fiori e li arbuscelli*
> *che qui la terra sol da sè produce.*[1]
> (XXVII, 133-135)

But set against this self-born, light-filled world, obscuring it, allowing it to appear only in flashes, is the world of history. History is darkness in the Cantos, an underworld, a swamp, an ooze, a chaos. Caught in the flood of time, human actions are drawn back, down, away from the light. History is Lethe, the river of forgetfulness, concealment. It is here that Pound locates the dramatic episodes of the poem. The unifying action of the Cantos is the struggle to move from the darkness of history into the light of the sun.

This is not exactly a religious vision, at least it is of no known religion, though it has affinities with many. The greatest poetry of light is in the *Paradiso.* Pound has always been aware of the religious nature of poetry, but because of his love for clarity of form and perception, he has always detested religious humbug. He swept it aside as part of the Victorian confusion, which it was. Essentially, Pound distrusts the vagueness of spirituality. He loves good workmanship, and would prefer a blasphemous poem if it were well written over a pious poem whose only recommendation was its piety. His master, Dante, was a great poetic craftsman. He was also a religious visionary. Dante's skill as a poet can be admired in isolation, but in truth it cannot be separated from his religious vision. Dante's spiritual experience led him to clear eyesight. Pound, born in a time of spiritual forgetting

[1] See there the sun that shines upon thy brow;
See the young grass, the flowers and coppices
Which this soil, of itself alone, makes grow.
(Binyon translation)

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and confusion, came back to clear eyesight and the physical world. And yet Dante remained his master in poetry.

Pound turned from the spiritual world to history. In this he is the product of his time. Historical determinism has long been the prevailing, the outward and established, basis of thought and social theory, despite the conflicts among its various ideologies. But Pound is a poet, not an ideologist, and while he has been caught up in the conflicts of this century and has suffered greatly for his errors, he has persisted in living through these experiences without betraying the demands of his art. In the end, he is able to summarize his vision of history in two short lines that speak for depths of experience:

> The hells move in cycles,
> No man can see his own end.
> *(Canto CXIII)*

There could be no more concise and forceful expression of the incompleteness of the historical world, of the absence of spirit and the absence of a sense of personal destiny which turn history into hell.

Pound is left with the cycles of hells. And he is left with the changes of nature, which he captures still in images of great beauty but with more understanding in the latest cantos:

> . . . to think what has been shall be.
> flowing, ever unstill.
>
> Then a partridge-shaped cloud over duststorm.
> *(Canto CXIII)*

Yet he does not deify either nature or history, and in that refusal lies much of his greatness. We may realize, reading the Cantos, that for several centuries men have been trying to see transcendent purposes or an eschatological meaning in the forces of history or nature, and have thus blinded themselves to both the spirit and the flesh. The Cantos are not a celebration of forces, but of light.

Pound was unaware of, or else indifferent to, the most intimate struggle of our time, a current of spiritual rebellion against the prevailing historicism: the work of the Russian novelists, of Russian thinkers like Shestov and Berdyaev, of Kierkegaard,

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Unamuno, and Simone Weil, of Franz Kafka and Antonio Machado. Some of these writers have appeared only recently or posthumously; others lived on the periphery of Europe. All of them are more or less disquieted beings, paradoxical and self-contradictory. They are digging for treasure in the darkest regions of existence, and nothing is clear or of firm outline in their work except the clear, hard light of their spirituality. And all of them have this in common: they cannot resign themselves to the hells of history and the closed cycles of nature. Pound's vision is related to theirs, but they are standing back to back: he looks precisely where they find nothing to see.

The Cantos carry into the open, into recognition, the ruin of history. A distinction should be made between the world of the epic and the worlds of fiction. The epic is always rooted in historical experience; it bears a high degree of fleshly suffering, and only a small degree of imagination or fantasy. The fiction of spiritual rebellion in our time has created many fantastic worlds. But Pound has rediscovered and opened up the epic world. In holding open the image of the ruin of history, without falling into a deification of force, he achieves the lucidity of epic vision. In a *propos* on the epic, the French thinker Alain has written:

> All pious deceptions are foreign to the epic. A just and good God, as in the *Jerusalem,* is no god of armies. No, it is the caprice of the gods that represents so well the play of blind forces. After courage, flight; after the force that knows no self-doubt, the fatigue that doubts everything. The gods dispense the one and the other, as they throw down rain, storm, lightning. And man is so made that these bitter reflections do not turn him from combat; on the contrary he gives himself up to his own forces, storm against storm. At the same time, the wise laws, the prudent life, the kinds of work whose end is the conservation of life, these are pure memories from which man finds himself forever separated. It is thus that he is able to see them.

In the *Iliad,* the "other" world, the world of natural harmony and peace, appears only in the similes, in glimpses, as a lost world. The epic stands astonished for a moment, then the madness breaks in again. There are similar moments in the Cantos:

> Sun up; work
> sundown; to rest
> dig well and drink of the water

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dig field, eat of the grain
Imperial power is? and to us what is it?

The fourth; the dimension of stillness.
And the power over wild beasts.
(Canto XLIX)

We come upon such passages and we wonder at the intensity of emotion Pound creates with them. How else should we understand this, how else understand, for example, the presence of Confucius and the teachings of Confucius throughout the poem, but as glimpses of a possible world which we are able to see because we are forever separated from it? Pound is not preaching Confucianism. He is not preaching against usury in the usury cantos. He offers no critique of any kind. The verb is "to see."

If we take Dante's poem as the model of coherent vision, neither the *Iliad,* nor the Cantos, nor the works of the "treasure diggers" are coherent. They are all rooted in existence. Dante's vision came to him from the beyond.

Pound returns to the sources of epic poetry, but his poem is in no way a copy of the ancient epic. Homer makes use of the devices of oral poetry, and many writers of literary epics have studiously copied him. Pound, on the other hand, makes use of the devices of print, not only in the lay-out of the page, but in his basic technique of the suppression of narrative links, which presupposes a fixed text. And there are more important differences. The *Iliad* is the tragedy of men delivered up to force; the Homeric cosmos is a severe order ruled by Fate, unconcerned with human suffering and deaf to supplications; the great opponent to the individual will of man is the dispensation of the universe. In the Cantos, the great opponent is history. It was Berdyaev who said, "there is a tragic conflict between history, with its complex movements and agencies, and man, with his unique and irreducible personal destiny." Finally, Pound does not share Homer's objectivity. He is implicated in the poem as he is in the act of writing it. The latest Cantos reveal his implication, but at the same time they project the image of the poet beyond personal failure:

I have brought the great ball of crystal;
who can lift it?

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Can you enter the great acorn of light?
But the beauty is not the madness
Tho' my errors and wrecks lie about me.
(Canto CXVI)

The action of the Cantos is the making of the poem, and the protagonist is the poet.

II

> When Socrates believed that there was a God, he saw very well that where the way swings off there is also an objective way of approximation, for example by the contemplation of nature and human history, and so forth. His merit was precisely to shun this way, where the quantitative siren song enchants the mind and deceives the existing individual.
> —Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*

The Cantos are a poem containing history. That idea was Pound's starting point, the intuition that led him to engage in the act of creating the poem, and as a beginning it is both clear and ambiguous: it is clear in delimiting the realm of the poem but it does not define any particular structure or end. Since Aristotle, poetry and history have been considered separate realms. The historian Burckhardt accepted Aristotle's judgment that poetry is superior to history, "because the faculty that gives birth to poetry is intrinsically higher than that of the greatest historian." What, then, is a poem containing history? How can a poet take history into his poem without either lowering poetry or making history transcendent? Does poetry become historical, or does history become poetic, in a poem containing history?

Canto I is narrated almost to the end by Odysseus and is largely a translation of the *Odyssey*, book 11. But it is not a translation of Homer. It is a translation into English alliterative verse of a Latin translation of Homer made by Andreas Divus in 1538. And it is not entirely a translation. When Odysseus meets Tiresias in the underworld, the prophet asks him:

A second time? why? man of ill star
Facing the sunless dead and this joyless region?

Here Odysseus becomes not only Homer's hero but also the first and ruling character of the Cantos, forced to return a second time

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to the region of the dead to receive the prophecy of his homecoming. The whole of the poem grows out of this first gesture of the return into Hades, which Pound endows with a rich simultaneity of meaning. He is not interested in recreating the character of Odysseus and fitting him out with new adventures. His Odysseus is the Odysseus of Homer, who reappeared during the renaissance in Divus's version. The character is mythological, but the poem is real. Pound gives us the date: 1538. This is a historical point of view.

In the next Canto a parallel distinction is made:

> Hang it all, Robert Browning,
> there can be but the one "Sordello."
> But Sordello, and my Sordello?
> Lo Sordels si fo di Mantovana.

The lines are simply an orientation; in them, Pound throws off the trappings of fiction. Browning took the name Sordello and created poetic fiction around it. Pound gives us a single line, a fragment in Provençal referring to the real Sordello. Historically, there is only one Sordello. The quotations from foreign languages, like the passages of translation, are placed in the Cantos because they are historical facts. An idea in its original expression, a remnant of poetry, are historical facts of the first order, provided their original form is respected. Pound is not interested in writing a sequel to the *Odyssey* or his own "Sordello." He is interested in the appearance at a certain point in history of a translation of Homer or of a particular poet. He lets these facts speak; or better, he draws out of memory their original voices.

The first two Cantos reveal Pound's practice, and thereby something of his vision, throughout the poem. We can make one necessary and surprising observation: there is nothing fictional, nothing mythological, nothing allegorical in the Cantos. Poetry in Pound's hands is an instrument of perception, not the medium of imagination. The myths that appear and reappear in the Cantos stand as historical evidence; that is, Pound does not re-tell ancient stories, he re-calls them, as embodiments of a certain force of spirit or transcending will which may rightly be called historical because it led to the building of temples, the carving of stone, the ordering of the calendar. It is the reserved power of

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myths, a power unknown to fiction, that Pound recalls. The Cantos are a poem containing history. Whatever is not history in them is drawn from nature.

But history usually implies sequence, and sequence implies an idea or theory of history through which the separate historical facts are drawn together and interpreted as a whole, a fabric or a process. The Cantos, on the contrary, are a collection of fragments that do not form a whole or sequence. Renaissance history is interrupted by American history, which is interrupted by Chinese history, and they are all interrupted by topical references and natural images. We read about Italian banking, we read parts of a letter of Jefferson on the Erie Canal project, we read parts of Confucian classics. Never do we get a coherent picture of the sequence of history, even of the sequence of one man's thoughts or acts. If this is a poem containing history, it is unintelligible from a historical point of view.

We come back to the question of poetry and history: if a historian looks for sequence or wholeness, what does a poet look for? Jacob Burckhardt called history the record of active humanity. Poetry is related to activity only "archetypally." That is, a poet may portray a man of action like Achilles, but he is not concerned with the details of the life of a man like Julius Caesar. Poetry is drawn to great *actions,* to single gestures, for all that is in them; it is not drawn to the business of marking out and running an empire. Historians present activity as a continuum of actions. Interruption of the continuum creates gestures. (In his essay, "What is Epic Theater?," Walter Benjamin has noted: ". . . the more frequently someone is interrupted in the act of acting, the more gestures result.") Interruption projects the moment out of time, just as quotation tears a fragment from its context and holds it up to a new light. For all such interruptions, death is the great model. To the historian, death has a relative position in the unending flow of events. But for living men, death is an absolute calamity, an event of a higher order, a moment which throws the whole of existence back into question. It is by allegiance to the sovereignty of death that poetry rises above history. Poetry recognizes that moments speak more than sequences, that in a moment the whole of a man's life—body, energy, spirit—can be revealed; whereas in order to see sequence you must limit your

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view to a single area of activity, and to see the whole fabric of a period is to lose sight of the living man. Pound embodies history through poetic vision. To demand historical sequence or wholeness from the Cantos is to mistake poetry for history.

Pound finds many translucent moments in history, and these moments become a kind of destiny for the man, just as the shades in Hades are held eternally in the attitudes of their deaths, at the moment when destiny touched them. Elpenor remains in our minds, caught in a single line: "a man of no fortune, and with a name to come." Confucius stands against an eternal background in the words Pound gives him:

> The blossoms of the apricot
> *blow from the east to the west,*
> And I have tried to keep them from falling.
> *(Canto XIII)*

Pound does not use historical figures to "stand for" general human types or to exemplify human qualities. They are who they are; when they speak, it is often in words from their own writings or from contemporary records. Just as the nature imagery in the Cantos is not placed in the poem for atmosphere and serves no metaphorical purpose, but is an embodiment of the shining presence of the world.

Implicit in Pound's concern with existence and in his search for moments, is a third fact of great importance for understanding the Cantos as a whole. Narrative usually implies the unfolding of events in time, but while the Cantos have the appearance of a narrative poem and contain many fragments of narrative, the movement of the poem from beginning to end is not a temporal but a spatial unfolding, the completion of a single, manifold vision which is essentially static. The completion of the vision takes time, in the writing or in the reading, but the time it takes is not active in the poem. This paradox appears whenever human destiny is in question. However, to say that the vision of the poem is static is not to say that Pound's poetry is objectivized and generic or that he performs the superb trick of negating time. By the very nature of his concern with history, Pound finds the emotion of time at the heart of the poem—the emotion of time lost, of time wasted, of the pastness or the passing away of time, of

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time unredeemed. But the emotion of time is itself timeless. History in the Cantos is not an ongoing process, but a condition.

The Cantos begin with a return to the Homeric underworld, which is the world of history, seen poetically, as it is in Homer. And the poem never leaves the hell of history, even at the end. Those who apply to the Cantos Pound's occasional suggestion that he might follow the structure of Dante's poem have tried to see the later cantos as a *Paradiso*. But they are not a *Paradiso*. Dante's poem is a comedy, but the Cantos are tragic. History becomes transcendent and symbolic in the Christian cosmos; lacking mercy, history takes on flesh and blood. But in the Cantos we are aware, as we could not be in Homer, of the absence of paradise, aware that the vision of paradise has vanished or has been lost. And thus Tiresias's question gains its full meaning:

> A second time? why? man of ill star
> Facing the sunless dead and this joyless region?

III

All poetry after the coming of Christianity moves towards a new revelation of the Christian cosmos. There can be no return to the tragic cosmos of the Greeks. Homeric tragedy is the tragedy of men in a universe ruled by force; it is the tragedy of force revealed in its purity and in its totality. The *Iliad* can only be created once. Already the Greek tragic drama moves beyond the cosmos of Homer. Armed with the secrets of the mysteries, the tragic poets make one assault after another against the wall of Fate in their struggle to make the cosmos respond to human destiny. In Homer the wall is superbly immovable; only men are moving. The Greeks had no need of a science that would prove to them experimentally and by means of logic and mathematics that the wall is indeed immovable, indifferent, and eternal. They directed their energies to breaking through it.

With the coming of Christ, the wall is broken through. After this intercession, the appearance of mercy in the universe, tragedy is essentially altered. Both Dante and Shakespeare discover tragic experience in the Christian cosmos, and their tragedy is authentic, but it is not Homeric. The coming of Christ is an eternal "I AM,"

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a moment that can never be past. Christ brings a new dimension to the universe, a new depth, we breathe a different air, and while Christ can be denied, repudiated, historically disproven in some men's minds, the intercession of Christ in the tragic universe cannot be forgotten. The famous words of Nietzsche's Zarathustra, "God is dead!" are a remembrance of the Christian cosmos, and the denial is much smaller than the remembrance.

Pound shares something of Nietzsche's experience. In the Cantos, *too, God is dead; the cosmos has been shattered,* the universe is closed down to the plane of history, poetry suffers absence of vision. Pound rediscovers the epic world, but at the other side of time. Pound and Homer have this in common: in Homer, men surrender themselves to violence, destruction, madness, in the midst of which the revelation of the "other" world comes over them; in Pound, men surrender themselves to history, which is violence, destruction, madness, abandoning the vision which has been revealed to them for the isolation of their own will to will. Tragic blindness is common to Homeric and Christian tragedy.

The difference lies in responsibility. Tragedy is not the essence of the Christian cosmos. The madness of Homer's heroes comes from their certainty that the universe is indifferent to them. Achilles says:

> Fate is the same for the man who holds back, the
> same if he fights hard.
> We are all held in a single honor, the brave with
> the weaklings.
> A man dies still if he has done nothing, as one
> who has done much.

The madness of men in the Christian cosmos is more complicated; it is a willed denial of mercy, a refusal of freedom, a demonic spell of blindness to the "within" in themselves and in the universe. The perfect expression of Homeric tragedy is the bitterness of Achilles; Simone Weil calls it "the only justifiable bitterness, for it springs from the subjections of the human spirit to force, that is, in the last analysis, to matter." The perfect expression of Christian tragedy is guilt. Guilt is somewhere at the heart of such apparently dissimilar works as *King Lear, Phèdre,* the *In-*

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ferno, the novels of Dostoevsky, Kafka's *Trial,* Brecht's *Mother Courage.* And guilt, both personal and historical, haunts the Cantos from beginning to end.

The Homeric cosmos was pre-Christian. After Christ, there can only be the Christian cosmos or a denial of it, and the denial does not lead back to "tragic gaiety" as some people have supposed, it leads to despair.

IV

> Nous voici donc revenus a un temps tout pareil à celui des Cyclopes . . . Les grandes déesses à nouveau sont assises, suscitées par l'homme sans doute, mais il ne les conçoit qu'avec terreur. Elles s'appellent Angström, Année-Lumière, Noyau, Fréquence, Onde, Énergie, Fonction-psi, Incertitude.
> —Francis Ponge, "Texte sur l'électricité."

Great poetry achieves its final unity in a revelation of the cosmos. History by itself is not cosmos; neither science nor art by itself is a revelation of the cosmos. The shattering of the cosmos was the work of the late Renaissance. The effects of the shattering of the cosmos can be seen in the succession of movements and theories in art, science, philosophy, and politics of the last three hundred years, in the forgetfulness of the spirit, and in the rise of the critical tendency. No amount of criticism can reconstitute the cosmos; criticism leads only to a multiplication of theories and excuses.

We have forgotten what the cosmos means. It is incumbent upon us, nevertheless, to recreate it, but to avoid falling into empty theorizing along the way. We need a clear, waking vision of the cosmos. The cosmos is not a creation on paper, nor is it an unknowable mechanism that rules the universe. The cosmos stands in the bond between thinking and being, responsive to the question of human destiny, not as the momentary, collective destiny of historical man but as the ultimate, personal destiny of each man. The cosmos is an order, but not a blind order that is imposed upon us and compels belief. In the cosmos, men are at home. Its order is freely created by us and yet it appears to us as a final gift. In *Citadelle,* Saint-Exupéry has written:

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> Order is the sign of existence, not its cause. In the same way the structure of a poem is the sign that it is complete and the mark of its perfection. It is never in the name of a structure that you work; you work to achieve a structure. . . . If you impose life, you shape order, and if you impose order, you impose death. Order for the sake of order is a caricature of life.

The history of the post-renaissance period is the history of the imposition of one order after another, one order driving out another, and therefore of the imposition of death. An imposed order, a theory of life, always controls or explains certain aspects of life, but others always escape it. The cosmos leaves nothing out, misses nothing, denies nothing, suppresses nothing. A will that is not at the same time attentive will impose an arbitrary order. To shape the cosmos takes will, but at the same time the utmost attentiveness. This attentiveness is love. Love guides the artist in the shaping of his work, which is ultimately a revelation of the cosmos.

All the thinking of the post-renaissance period is riddled with theory. Pound's thought is also riddled with theory, and critics have often denounced the crudeness of his ideas, as though it were better to have one set of theories than another. But Pound is no theorist when the language begins to speak through him. Critics always over-theorize poetry because they see the work after the fact. They do not take enough account of the poet's attentiveness. A true poet perfects his art, not his thinking; rhythm, which comes first, calls and orders the words, and vision awakens in the poet's hands. It is clear from the latest cantos that Pound had no preconception of where the act of writing would lead him. He knew that the cosmos was within the reach of poetry:

> Came Neptunus
> his mind leaping
> like dolphins.
> These concepts the human mind has attained.
> To make Cosmos—
> To achieve the possible—
>
> *(Canto CXVI)*

But it is in this same canto that he says, "I cannot make it cohere." And it is true that the cosmos is not revealed in the Cantos the way it is in Dante's poem, as a waking vision of the transcen-

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dent unity of life. Dante moves from lowest to highest in the eternal world. Pound remains on the plane of nature and history, which is the epic world. But the Cantos recall the cosmos, they are filled with a remembrance of a unity, a coherence, a source of light that is beyond the epic world. The Cantos are not visionary, they are tragic. The cosmos appears in the poem not as a realized vision but in fragments, glimpses, as a lost world.

M'amour, m'amour
what do I love and
where are you?
That I lost my center
fighting the world.
The dreams clash
and are shattered—
And that I tried to make a paradiso
terrestre.
(Notes for *Canto CXVII* et seq.)

Irony rules much of modern literature, but the Cantos are not ironic. Pound comes in the end to a recognition which causes him deep personal suffering, but which gives him a sense of equity such as is almost unknown among us. Tragedy is both an end and a beginning. The sense of equity that is born of tragic experience precedes all ethical choices and is the source of clear eyesight.

V

Civilization is hooped together, brought
Under a rule, under a semblance of peace
By manifold illusion; but man's life is thought,
And he, despite his terror, cannot cease
Ravening through century after century,
Ravening, raging, and uprooting that he may come
Into the desolation of reality.
—W. B. Yeats, ("Meru")

The narrative of the Cantos unfolds through a complex series of masks and voices. Pound has a fine dramatic sense; he can present a character or describe an event with extreme concision and yet capture the movement of life. Nevertheless, behind the complexity there is a unity of voice and vision in the poem: at first,

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Pound's interest is directed outward from himself, projected into various characters, but as the poem reaches its end it becomes more and more turned inward. The central figure of the *Pisan Cantos* is Pound, the prisoner in his steel cage at Pisa; the history he deals with is the period of his own life. The poem ends as a self-portait in the *Drafts and Fragments.*

In the epilogue to *El hacedor,* Borges has written:

> A man proposes to himself the task of portraying the world. Through the years he peoples a space with images, provinces, kingdoms, mountains, lowlands, ships, islands, fish, habitations, instruments, stars, horses, and characters. Shortly before dying, he discovers that this patient labyrinth of lines traces the image of his face.

What does Borges mean? Either that men are so bound up within themselves that all of their attempts to embody the world, to objectify existence, to reveal reality in itself, are doomed to produce nothing but self-images; or else that the reality is not in the world or in images of the world but in the desire that speaks itself in images, all the more intensely as it transcends the world, so that what was at first sight an image of the world turns out to be an image of the soul. I will hold with the second interpretation. Nature is sufficient to itself, it does not need to be embodied or represented. I agree with Claudel when he asks: ". . . if this world around us is the only reality, if the only explanation we can find is a form of mimicry and not a key, what is the use of all the labor to bring forth from our poetic resources a vain semblance?" It is something else that asks to be embodied and that poetry alone embodies: not the content of the poem, but the act of poetry.

The American poet is born without tradition. In this sense, Pound and Borges are equally deprived. But while America is typical of this dilemma, we are not alone in it. The Russians, for example, have had a borrowed culture for centuries—they have even borrowed Marxism. And Yeats, also, is an instance of a poet struggling to repossess a tradition from which he has been uprooted. An artist born within a living tradition does not have to seek for it or struggle with it; he need not know the origins of his tradition or the extent of its influence upon him in

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order to do excellent work. But the "modern sensibility" is a consciousness of being thrown out of all traditions, of a rupture, a break with the continuity of the past. It is really the dilemma of too much freedom, and what is important is not the fact of discontinuity but the way in which an artist reacts to it.

Borges reacts with his essay, "The Argentine Writer and Tradition," in which he says:

> I repeat that we should not be alarmed and that we should feel that our patrimony is the universe; we should assay all themes, and we cannot limit ourselves to purely Argentine subjects in order to be Argentine; for either being Argentine is an inescapable act of fate —and in that case we shall be so in all events—or being Argentine is a mere affectation, a mask.

Borges has been criticized for being un-Argentine. Pound has often been criticized for being un-American—that is, for obstinately refusing to be limited to American subjects, for living abroad and affecting European manners, and for being outside of the mainstream of American letters. It is hard for a specialist in Americana to find a place for him. Nevertheless, Pound has not escaped being American. The idiom of his poetry is American speech, its accents and rhythms are unmistakeable and more American than, say, the odd language of Whitman. The question of whether or not Pound has produced "American literature" is of little importance. It is of greatest importance that the source of his poetic language is the mother tongue.

The Latin tradition, as T. S. Eliot has defined it, means a highly developed system of references and a certain orientation in the Universe. Within the Latin tradition certain uses of language, certain images and symbols are at home. But the American poet is deprived of tradition by accident of birth, and he is not at home. Eliot solved this problem for himself by adopting the Latin tradition, consciously bringing his work into harmony with a single great development of culture and history. On the other hand, Pablo Neruda, also an American poet, adopted communism and thereby gained a larger frame of reference and a substitute for tradition. But Pound and Borges, and Yeats, for example, do not take either of these ways. In fact, all three of these poets show a preference for utterly foreign and esoteric cultural references. Eliot directs his readers back into the Latin tradition, and the

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Latin tradition in turn throws light upon his work. Neruda directs his readers to certain social and political loyalties which in turn throw light upon his interest in objects, materials, labor, and the abstract common man. These two poets, opposite as they are, are alike in that their work respresents a conscious decision to seek out a relationship to larger patterns of history or thought which they judge to be the truth in the midst of chaos. Both Eliot and Neruda underwent a crisis of disillusionment followed by a conversion to orthodoxy.

Traditions are bound to time and place; they are the bearers of wisdom and experience, the significant past of a people, through history. But to be bound to time, place, and history is a form of slavery. Traditions are not only qualitative; they are also quantitative, generalizing, and as such they stand in opposition to the individual human soul. Piety is the respectful remembrance of tradition; only the pious man can receive the riches that tradition offers. But excess of piety is slavery, to history, to the dead, to time. The choruses of Greek tragedy commonly celebrate the pious man, but every tragedy presents an act of profanation in which the protagonist, the tragic man, asserts his will against the laws of tradition, the power of generality and the common fate. He suffers, of course, and the righteousness of the collective opinion is borne out. But the profound mystery of tragedy is that our attention is riveted to the suffering of the single man, not to the collective righteousness of the chorus.

The work of poets like Yeats, Pound, and Borges has been to take in any number of traditions and melt them in the heat of their own desire into an image of the unhoused human soul.

Their works abound in images of the world, they show a concern with history, they portray the diversity of human types, they reflect, argue, theorize, and yet all of this turns out to be not an end in itself but the means to an end. And that end is the existence of poetry, the physiognomy of the poet. Do we know, or have we forgotten, what the existence of poetry means?

Life as men live it and think it is an interweaving of the actual with the possible, so complicated that men always confound the actual with the possible and the possible with the actual and rarely see clearly what is happening to them. One great gift that poetry gives us is the experience of the actual, which

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brings joy even when what we experience poetically is terrible in its implications. In the epic, the actual world appears suddenly, as a realization that comes over us in the midst of the simultaneous unfolding of the poem. The possible world appears at the same time, metaphorically, that is, by way of comparison. Speaking of the Homeric similes, Alain says:

> The studious man has imitated these similes a hundred times; but in vain. And he is astonished that the art of painting should be the coldest of all games. That is simply because he looks at the fresh valley, at the spring, at the herds coming down to drink; because he has never properly mixed the color of despair, which gives such price to all things irremediably lost.

The poet, as opposed to the studious man, sees both the actual world and the lost world because he is at a certain remove from *both* of them. He sees the possible world of natural harmony and the conservation of life superimposed upon the whirlwind chaos of battle which is the world of history. But poetry confers upon this double vision a distance and an emotion that are its essential mystery. Even when the poet places himself in the midst of the action, as both Dante and Pound do, the distance and the emotion remain, because they belong to poetry, not to the poet.

How is it that we are able to contemplate what is most terrible for us to see, and even to feel joy in it? What awakens in us at that extremity? The "desolation of reality" is unbearable to most of us, to those of us, that is, who place all our hopes on the material world, on history, or on tradition. At the level at which we experience it, the desolation of reality cannot be accepted, it can only be suffered. Thus it gives birth to illusions. But it can be accepted poetically. Tragedy is the wholeness of experience, suffering, and an unforeseen promise.

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W. S. MERWIN AND CLARENCE BROWN

Four Poems by Osip Mandelstam

*

Insomnia. Homer. Taut sails.
I've read down the ships to the middle of the list:
the strung-out flock, the stream of cranes
that once rose above Hellas.

Flight of cranes crossing strange borders,
leaders drenched with the foam of the gods,
where are you sailing? What would Troy be to you,
men of Achaea, without Helen?

The sea—Homer—it's all moved by love. But to whom
shall I listen? No sound now from Homer,
and the black sea roars like a speech
and thunders up the bed. [*1915*]

Tristia

I have studied the science of good-byes,
the bare-headed laments of night.
The waiting lengthens as the oxen chew.
In the town the last hour of the watch.
And I have bowed to the knell of night in the rooster's
throat
when eyes red with crying picked up their burden
of sorrow and looked into the distance
and the crying of women and the Muses' song became one.

Who can tell from the sound of the word "parting"
what kind of bereavements await us,
what the rooster promises with his loud surprise
when a light shows in the acropolis,

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dawn of a new life
the ox still swinging his jaw in the outer passage,
or why the rooster, announcing the new life,
flaps his wings on the ramparts?

A thing I love is the action of spinning:
the shuttle fluttering back and forth, the hum of the
spindle,
and look, like swan's down floating toward us,
Delia, the barefoot shepherdess, flying—
o indigence at the root of our lives,
how poor is the language of happiness!
Everything's happened before and will happen again,
but still the moment of each meeting is sweet.

Amen. The little transparent figure
lies on the clean earthen plate
like a squirrel skin being stretched.
A girl bends to study the wax.
Who are we to guess at the hell of the Greeks?
Wax for women, bronze for men:
our lot falls to us in the field, fighting,
but to them death comes as they tell fortunes. [*1918*]

*

We shall meet again, in Petersburg,
as though we had buried the sun there,
and then we shall pronounce for the first time
the blessed word with no meaning.
In the Soviet night, in the velvet dark,
in the black velvet Void the loved eyes
of blessed women are still singing,
flowers are blooming that will never die.

The capital hunches like a wild cat,
a patrol is stationed on the bridge,
a single car rushes past in the dark,
snarling, hooting like a cuckoo.
For this night I need no pass.

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I'm not afraid of the sentries.
I will pray in the Soviet night
for the blessed word with no meaning.

A rustling, as in a theater,
and a girl suddenly crying out,
and the arms of Cypris are weighed down
with roses that will never fall.
For something to do we warm ourselves at a bonfire,
maybe the ages will die away
and the loved hands of blessed women
will brush the light ashes together.

Somewhere audiences of red flowers exist,
and the fat sofas of the loges,
and a clockwork officer
looking down on the world.
Never mind if our candles go out
in the velvet, in the black Void. The bowed shoulders
of the blessed women are still singing.
You'll never notice the night's sun.

[*25 November 1920*]

*

Armed with the sight of the fine wasps
sucking at the earth's axis, the earth's axis,
I recall each thing that I've had to meet,
I remember it by heart, and in vain.

I do not draw or sing
or ply the dark-voiced bow.
I make a little hole in life. How I envy
the strength and cunning of the wasps!

Oh if only once the sting of the air and the heat
of summer could make me hear
beyond sleep and death
the earth's axis, the earth's axis.

[*8 February 1937*]

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HILDA MORLEY

Five Poems

1.

You standing always on a
verge—the edge of a cliff the back road
to the forest whose roots are

tangled, tangling themselves
further, who cannot
be planted who may wish for

rebirth may hope to heal and
be healed but who end always
knowing no more than

that we kill each other—the wind
drives you also. The city
has dispersed me and gathered

me back. The city has scattered
Is there any reason for me any
reason to remember (remember you

as I do running down the street
from the doorway of the taxi?) There is
a fresh wind today. Birds fly

seaward. The dry leaves
this year: I have scarcely
seen them

2.

That I raged up and down tonight

(you never saw it) forgive. A dry
wind devoured me & could not stop.
The desert dogs howled over the years
drowning

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in quicksand, tongues out wrinkling
for a drop, face shut

against a hail that burned &
pitted. No shield offered but the
blinded head, the lids of nakedness,

the untrained mouth, the cheek that
did not know, the hands
prepared for something else. The window

panes grew steel grew iron.
Grew death. Nothing is forgotten. Nothing
can be (and must you go too?)

Forgive then.

3.

The hand of the unknown
writer on the sand
has the message
pricked out in code:
minims
on an unprimed canvas,
where the ant-trails
tunnel the beach.
Serrated
sun-lines in the green water,
wind-flutings
in the sand,
make a moving warp
for virgules
of sea-weed.
We are caught in the web all of us.

Twice the bird cries out
in the early dawn and is silent,
white
the sea-gulls are blown westward

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to the lighthouse.
No shells here,
but the cloudbank
weights itself to an arrowhead,
deliberately,
assembles itself before melting.
The sea-spray
likewise, but more quickly.
One bird dashes headlong
eastward.
The web
grows tighter,
can strangle:
the limit which our carelessness
is allowed.

4.

That special hell of Dante's into
which we were thrown
(was it
rightly?)
on that particular
street
would be left behind
I thought
But here, too,
behind the darker and the lighter
greens
even among the shadows
striping the well-mown lawns
or above the carefully
molded bushes, its
glance reaches
us, baleful,
or observes in us a possible
field of action.

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Even here
where the birds dart hastily
into the branches
here, too,
there is a glaring

5·

Why does the wild cherry tree
blooming
on the Hudson
make everything
more so
more itself?
So the green
of the elm is greener than
when it stands alone,
the sky
bluer
So you
are one of those
who make others
more themselves
more what they
are!
Of those who draw them to the extreme
verge,
the edge
that crackles:
that is
your beauty;
that is what
you do

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ROGER HOBDELL

Frontiers of Summer

(Part Two)

Chords soon to quiver under young fingers
Sophie hums in the kitchen warm day nearly over

Dear lost days rocked in the skiff which she decorated
strings in the wake rippled the azure

The roar of the weir modulated behind her bitten sandwich
foam chateaux drifted on the steam

Impossible to see all the reflections
two immortals on varnished planks above two water beetles

Leaves drummed on the boathouse as I returned
for the flowers pressed beneath her cushion nightfall

The dark reverberated with cries from the audience
nightingales scared in the surrounding hills

Perfumes mingled in the amphitheatre Sophie searching
through the opera-glass for the young girl

The few couples chattered about the meaning of the tragedy
already my trousers soaked in dew

The torch shone into every part of the makeshift
dressing room filled with the yelps of a mongrel

Barking echoed all round I tried to taste the lipstick
on a cigarette thrown under the camelias

Grapes grew in clusters odour of plants under glass
I heaved without success at the water-butt

The clematis soaring from the overgrown rusty shovels
beneath which lay forgotten corms

In a hundred pieces the pane of the conservatory
shattered clumsily by my seed box

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A stack of flower boxes wobbled on the trolley
the porter hoping to avoid a cloud of steam

Absurd whistle of the engine Sophie laughing
at the tilting cognac hurtling through the pine forest

Heavy ornament covered the toilet an emblem sunk in the soap
the afternoon passed in this way

Noises within a noise at the station
miles from the site I began to smell my dank armpits

Sweating from teaching harmony
pretty Academy uniforms on the brown dry lawns

Benches climbed at intervals
behind the closed front gates hung with a cobweb

Between us and the laurels a textbook
laid down for a moment now green with mould

Giggling delayed the annual photograph
under the black cloth her young legs capered

Side by side the legs of the lady and the hound
the tapestry fountain splashed in the ferns quietly

In the silence half-way down the hill the wooden hut
quickly the untamed footfall on the moss

Waves falling on the old sand my watch catching in her hair
Paola shrieked ran back to the sea

Was it a chain beneath the mussels I clung briefly
to the wreck swayed with the marine bracken

At the base of the rocks the dry discarded costume
univalves shared the pool with Paola

Old feet and young held in the pool of light
the candle snatched from the table by a guest he was dead

Already a stick of blossom in a jug the doctor gave me back the pen
stumbling in the dark on the tiles

Some empty some full coffee-cups near the embers
caught the rising sun through Paola's nightdress

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Discordant forest baying dawn mist the map fell
on a myriad insects pulling a carcass

All at once rain drops hissed on the logging machine
a brood mare beyond flecked with sawdust

No path on this side of the fence not a breath of wind
suddenly a fir-cone dropped to the ground

In a moment the clock in the tower above would strike
it was waiting the wasp on the floorboards

Layers of dust piled on my shoe
in past the casement grew the creeper reaching my ears

Two wine bottles in a single rack scent of clock oil
and musty fragrance of last year's maize

Cobs jostled in the eaves water spilt on the old sofa
from a flower vase sound of her pissing

Red cottons woven in the mattress wearing only a vest
she lay in the sunlight talking to a caterpillar

So many fledglings hatched on the crumbling stairs
laughing she climbed on my bare shoulders

Lillies unsheathed trembling on the grandpiano
Paola in the evening knocks on the door

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JOHN HOLLOWAY

A Mirror

A poet and his coloured girl,
Out walking, find this silent park.
A poet and his coloured girl
Find the empty house, quiet in the sun.
Find the heavy door undone.
Explore the cool, high half-dark.

Hand in hand, from room to room,
They stroll, admiring as they pass,
Frieze, architrave and tympanum
That frame them in. Now, from the wall,
Great lights let bands of great light fall;
And here—the old, foxed cheval-glass

Behind a pool of sunshine, stands
Still as a stone sealing a grave.
Silvered once by some craftsman's hands
In a quiet English market town,
The mirror stands, in the brown
Mahogany, planked once by some slave.

Looking, they see themselves. Then,
In the inter-locking glass and frame,
See themselves, much more linked, again.
Half-troubled, half-defiant, half sure,
Half joke, they want to play once more
Their simple, never-failing game.

So, down their picnic haversack
Goes; and they pile their clothes above.
Then, one shape white, one shape black,
Join, at the bright wide open gate
That takes them in, leads them straight
Back to themselves and true hard love.

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The mirror holds them: sunned, nude.
And that *piano nobile,*
Empty, but now all plenitude,
Rings out that two bare people can
Turn everything Mozartian:
. . . Or could do, were it not for the

Disaster. One spontaneous
One careless, jubilant gesture, should
That send that carillon through that house?
They knocked the mirror. In a crash
It crumples; crumbles; and one flash
Brings rain in shattered glass and wood.

The darkened glass, the whitened strut.
Dust on the floor, fine speck by speck.
They thought themselves alone there, but
Another living thing, the worm
Was close, was close. It too can squirm
In a dark place, and caused this wreck.

What wreck? They stare across the floor.
They pause . . . they laugh . . . then they go on,
Mozartian as they did before.
Each one reflecting, they mistook:
Love need not—almost, cannot look
At its transparent union.

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JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

TWO ESTABLISHED CONTEMPORARY DRAMATISTS have recently had their latest works produced here. Typically, Harold Pinter's *Old Times* had the shortest of waits before arriving on Broadway in an important deluxe production; Jean Genet's *The Screens* had to wait a decade before being put on for a few performances by The Chelsea Theater Center of Brooklyn in an inadequate ambience and with a domestic and rather obscure cast. I find both these playwrights overrated, but at least in Genet there lurks a genuine poet, even a dramatic poet, who unfortunately cannot shake off the pederast and criminal he has to carry with him as ballast. In Pinter, I see only a clever ex-actor turned playwright full of surface theatricality underneath which resides a big, bulging zero. But Pinter knows how to make his nothingness look portentous, whereas Genet undercuts his strongest linguistic and visual gifts by yielding ostentatiously to his aberrant impulses.

Old Times is even emptier than the usual Pinter product. There has, in the past, been an aura of glittering sinisterness around his work, which people could equate with some inscrutable anguish or horror festering at the heart of existence—or whatever phrase best dignified the hollowness at the core of Pinter's plays. But here we have Deeley, who says he is a filmmaker, and his wife Kate, living in an elegantly converted English farmhouse, and both characters and place are too tidily slicked down to generate unclassifiable anxieties. The pair talk or, rather, muse about Anna, who was Kate's roommate twenty years ago, then married a rich and eminent Italian, and is about to return on a first visit. She is seen during this conversation with her back to us, immobile in the upstage shadows. Presently she joins the couple, and the rest of the play is the customary Pinterian battle of wits in which words are devious and indistinctly allusive: precise about odd, irrelevant details, but reticent and evasive about anything essential. The purpose is to entice the other person into some sort of damaging self-revelation and manipulate him into moral and physical subservience. For example, if A asks B about C, "Is he away for long periods?" the answer is, "I think sometimes. Are you?" By taking "to be away" in a figurative rather than literal sense, the answerer has made the questioner, presumably, feel ridiculed, humiliated, bested. But we may well wonder what sort of gain this is: is there any real victory here, and at what? A parlor game, at best.

We care neither about the characters nor about the issues. It appears that there may have been a lesbian relationship between the two

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women when they were roommates. There also seems to have existed a struggle for dominance between them and, perhaps, an exchange of identities, which manifested itself in Anna's stealing Kate's underwear. Deeley and Kate met in a suburban cinema where both of them were seeing, apparently for the first time, *Odd Man Out,* after which they struck up a conversation; later it emerges that Kate and Anna had seen the film together beforehand. It emerges also that at a party, Deeley once stared up the skirt of a woman wearing his future wife's underwear—Anna, one presumes. There may, in fact, have been something between him and Anna. And Kate may have married him on the rebound, after she was rejected by Anna. And so on, through a set of imperfectly remembered or wishfully imagined incidents. What is Anna up to now? Has she come to reclaim Kate? Or would she rather snatch Deeley from her? Or does she intend to subjugate both?

But of what consequence are these shadowboxing shadows? Why should anyone give a tinker's damn about such nebulous figures with wispy, indefinable, and probably illusory problems? Memory and oblivion, at any rate, do not work in this way. Typically, someone will declare, "I was interested once in the arts, but I can't remember which ones they were." That is getting a cheap laugh out of an absurdity that has no bearing on human reality. You might say that Pinter is not trying to write realistic dialogue. Yet even if absurd, or absurdist, the statement must have some human relevance. The joke here is purely verbal, based on the fact that "arts" is a plural noun, requiring that pronominal "they" that, in this context, falls estrangingly, comically on our ears. If the line were deprived of its grammatical idiosyncrasy and ran "I had an artistic interest once, but I can't remember what it was," most of the humor would be gone, and most of the pseudomeaningfulness as well. Now when Beckett's Estragon answers Vladimir's question about what to do while they are waiting with "What about hanging ourselves?" the remark is certainly absurdist, and part of the humor surely lies in the casual formulation of so dread a notion. Yet there is a human truth in this: people have been known to kill themselves out of sheer frustrating ennui. But no one who once dabbled in poetry or was a concert- or museum-goer forgets this—ever. Or consider the moment in *The Importance of Being Earnest*—as antirealist, antinaturalist or absurdist a play as you might ask for—when Algernon tries to see Cecily's diary. "Oh no," she exclaims; "you see, it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form I hope you will order a copy." On the face of it, this is simply an absurd, funny paradox. Forthwith, however, three shocking truths emerge: (1) A young girl's private life is really a highly marketable commodity; (2) The modest young lady herself is the first to wish to exploit it; (3) The young man she

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loves and wishes to marry is to be her first paying customer. Though you may dispute the exact amount of truth in Wilde's cynicism, the proposition holds at least as a queasy human possibility; Pinter's joke is just a quibble on words.

Worse than that, *Old Times* suffers from what I can only call spiritual shallowness. It is of the greatest possible unimportance with whom one of these figurines spouting dim witticisms or pregnant silences (false pregnancies, as I once called them) has slept, is sleeping, or will sleep. In a good bedroom farce, the problem becomes one of stratagems and timing, of dramaturgy becoming geometry, of plotting becoming the cogs of a complicated, fascinating clockwork. In a decent comedy, we get involved with the people and so care about how they bed down. But here it is merely a question of ascendancies among puppets; we might as soon care about which horse on a merry-go-round will come to a halt ahead of another. When, in the second act, the scene shifts to the bedroom of the cottage, Deeley explains the furnishings to Anna: "The good thing about these beds is that they are susceptible to any amount of permutation . . . It's the casters that make all this possible." What is the point or joke? That by means of harmless-sounding badinage Deeley is trying to generate an atmosphere of seductive sexual innuendo—*ménage à trois,* perversion, orgies. Any hack farce writer can do as much.

But what about the language? the Pinterites will ask. Well, what about it? Like Albee, Pinter is linguistically *nouveau riche.* Anna uses the word "lest" and Deeley is startled: "The word 'lest.' I haven't heard it in a long time." Later, there is a similar reaction: "Gaze?" "The word 'gaze.' You don't hear it very often." Accordingly, we get a certain overwriting whose verbosity is supposed to impress the audience as much as the dramatis personae; it may take any form from euphuism to bureaucratic jargon. While Kate is taking a bath, Deeley expatiates to Anna: "She gives herself a very good scrub, but can she, with the same efficiency, give herself a good rub? . . . I have not found this to be the case . . ." The purpose, again, is to create an aura of enticing sexuality for three (i.e., Which one of us gets to dry that lovely body we both desire? Couldn't we perhaps do it together?), but the mock-serious grandiloquence about trivia is again only a verbal trick, not worthy of being—as it, alas, is—one of the comic mainstays of Pinter's oeuvre.

There is also something rather pitiful about a sixty-minute play like *Old Times* being stretched by means of those Pinter pauses to a little over seventy; then, furbished with a twenty-minute intermission, getting peddled as a full-length two-act play. It is interesting to note, by the way, how our full-length dramas have shrunk from the five acts of the Renaissance to the four of the romantics and earlier realists, then to the three acts of most twentieth-century theatre until, most recently, the two-acter became prevalent. But at least *Waiting*

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for Godot is an honest two-act play, not, like *Old Times,* a one-acter with delusions of grandeur and genuine *longueurs.* There comes a point when the paying customer can feel swindled—and a non-paying critic no less so: this is the sort of play one used to feel entitled to getting two or three of per evening. It is as if Pinter had come to a party dressed in nothing but a pair of shorts, which, quite aside from the quality of the shorts, is not really sufficient attire.

But the playwright is lucky in his associates. Peter Hall knows how to stage these plays so that they assume a semblance of meaning. He gets from the actors all kinds of rubatos, crescendos, diminuendos, overtones and soft-pedalings; he works out effects of movement in space worthy of a kinetic sculptor, of light and shadow to do an old Dutch master proud. John Bury executes the lighting plot as if it were a grand conspiracy (which it is), and designs his dependably brilliant sets—in this case, sparse modern furniture arranged somewhat bizarrely, proportioned a little discordantly, and surrounded with rather more space than customary. The colors, too, are a mite too coolly understated; the floor is raked; the walls given exaggerated foreshortening, so that our eye is fed more perspective than is its regular diet; one corner of the acting surface protrudes disquietingly from behind the curtain. The total effect is a refined malaise, as in those puzzle drawings where we are told that something is wrong, but are hard put to track it down. This is the exact visual equivalent of Pinter's dramaturgy, and is managed rather better by the designer than by the author. The acting is not the very best British acting, but a more than acceptable second best: Robert Shaw seems a bit unduly mechanistic at times, Mary Ure uses her voice a bit too much like a yoyo, and Rosemary Harris turns Anna into someone a trifle more smug than mysterious.

"Listen, what silence!" we are told at the very beginning of the play, and, I suppose, the strongest pleas on behalf of Pinter are based on his supposedly innovative use of silence. Very well, I grant Pinter the title of Grand Pauseur, but, actually, Jean-Jacques Bernard started a school of playwriting known as *l'école du silence* in the early twenties, in which the characters revealed themselves more through their silences than through their words. But these were, so to speak, communicative silences, and a character like the eponymous Martine (1922) bared her soul by means of what she did not say. Pinter's silences are as stingy as his words: both withhold rather than impart things. But this lack of generosity is indispensable to Pinter, precisely because he has nothing to say. In any case, the value of silence is greater to poetry than to drama because it can be put to more spectacular use within or against a metrical structure than in the looser aggregate of prose, where it stands in less clear contrast to its surroundings. Poetry, moreover, is sound appropriately framed by silence, but theatre is also action and interplay not necessarily

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suited to such framing and apt to get lost in lacunae. With his mania for silences. Pinter is to drama what John Cage is to music, and Ad Reinhardt to painting. It might be called a case of premature silence. All true art finally abuts on the ineffable, where there is nothing left but stillness, meditation and awe; but putting the silence before the words (or tones, or colors and shapes) is no better than putting the cart before the horse.

Quite the opposite problems confront us with Genet's *The Screens.* Here was a work which, with one intermission, lasted about five hours, and the first trouble was that, so far from getting too little, we were getting too much. There are seventeen scenes in the play, which Genet wanted performed outdoors on four levels, the highest of them representing eternity and the afterlife. The plot ostensibly concerns Algeria and its fight for independence; the real theme, however, is yet another exaltation of evil, a celebration of the elegance of vice. "It's not the meek shall inherit the earth," we learn, "but the abject and the vile." Accordingly, the hero is Saïd, a poor thief, who can obtain in marriage only Leïla, the ugliest girl of all. Their relationship is sheer sadomasochist love-hate, and Saïd, in the war, turns traitor, so as to experience abjection beyond that of prison, which even Leïla, turned thief to share his fate, could attain to. Saïd, executed by his own people, is an outcast of sorts even in the realm of the dead; Leïla, though no longer alive, never even makes it to the other world. Saïd's mother, a garbage-collector who hates and is hated by people, becomes a heroine by mistake; Warda, a whore and a bawd, complains: "At the butcher's and the grocer's women say hello to me. I am less and less a somebody."

If the trouble with Pinter is that underneath his portentous pose we sense utter emptiness, the trouble with Genet is that though he says a mouthful, often with great poetic gusto (albeit with prolixity and repetitiousness), it happens to be something that most of us cannot accept. Genet, as much as any playwright, represents for me the problem of how to come to terms with a work whose content—yes, content in the outmoded, discredited sense of something that might just refuse to become blithely identical with form—I can neither accept nor even feel much sympathy for. Interestingly enough, Genet himself makes fun in *The Screens* of another playwright who presents a similar difficulty, when he has one of the *colons* describe the ideal slave state with "thousands of Moslem boys reciting Claudel in the original." Claudel, too, could rise to great heights of poetic drama, although I (like Genet, obviously) find his message of Catholic asceticism based on self-denial repellent. But is the paean to self-sacrifice perhaps a fraction more endurable than the extolling of evil and rhapsodizing about dirt? Claudel's figures are mostly self-destructive, whereas Genet's upside-down utopia is a threat to everything I stand for.

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Genet, in some ways, rather resembles Oscar Wilde—is, in fact, a Wilde whose paradoxes dare speak their name. It would probably be quite fruitful (no pun intended) to make a study of the relationship of the paradox to homosexual drama (Cocteau, Stein, Joe Orton come immediately to mind): a meaningful relation seems to exist between sexual inversion and the inversion of values as embodied in the paradox. "At bottom, all ways are alike," says Saïd, and at bottom this may be true, but not necessarily elsewhere. *The Screens* is called, in French, *Les Paravents,* and I sat there wondering whether *Les Par-derrières* would not have been a more fitting title. Otherwise, however, the play is often extremely witty, its language almost always charged with poetry. There are frequent irrelevancies and dawdlings, but our flagging interest is always revived, and never allowed to conk out during this endless, sticky, mazy, maddening marathon of a play. Sometimes it is the satirizing of the *colons,* sometimes the vertiginous involutions of intimate relationships; at other times, it is the lowlife comedy of whores and thieves, or the serenely cynical vision of the dead that delights us. I suspect that the pederastic view of the French army could have been good for a few raucous laughs too, had John Granger, who played the Lieutenant, been better. What really captures the imagination is the flaring up of verbal and visual images, of scenic devices like that of natives hastily painting conflagrations on screens while down front the European landowner prattles and postures on and on.

Minos Volanakis is credited with the translation, and it is hard to believe that a Greek who has been working in England could come up with such racily idiomatic American talk; but however this came about, it was splendid. Volanakis' staging was equally good, allowing for the limitations of the small, shabby box that is the theatre on the fourth floor of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and of a pick-up cast that was considerably less than stellar. But among these 43 or 44 actors (counts differ) playing as many as five or six different parts, the level of performing managed to be surprisingly far from contemptible. There were weak performances, to be sure, notably that of Robert Jackson, who made Saïd into a hysterical eccentric: a fidgety eel who did not change in the course of the action, except to become shriller and more hysterical. Several performances were stereotypes, especially Despo's Kadidja, but one, at least, had real stature: Julie Bovasso's Mother. It is regrettable that Miss Bovasso wastes much of her time and energy on writing godforsaken plays, when she can give such stylish, slightly mannered but shrewdly insinuating performances as this. The effective costumes of Willa Kim and the unassumingly inventive stage design of Robert Mitchell aided the general effort handsomely; The Chelsea Theater Center of Brooklyn is becoming more and more professional in the finest sense.

The two other recent theatrical events of distinction and good

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augury also took place off-Broadway. Both were second plays confirming the gifts of their young authors. At the Public Theater, Joseph Papp, while still showing *The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel,* mounted another play by David Rabe, *Sticks and Bones.* This, though written before the very fine *Pavlo,* was revised subsequently, so that it is both an earlier and a later play. While in *Pavlo* Rabe considered the effect of the Vietnam war on its participants, in *Sticks and Bones* he examines the disasters of the home front. A Vietnam veteran, David, comes back blind to his silent-American family, parents and a brother, who manage to be far blinder than he. Their names derive from television: Ozzie, Harriet and younger brother, Rick; it is Rabe's double nelson on America. The protagonist tries to convey to his kin the horrors of war, but Ozzie is lost in bittersweet dreams of what he might have become, and bitter anxieties about the frustrated life he leads. Harriet is merely plying her family with her cookery, her beloved Father Donald (the family confessor), and friendly, homespun platitudes. As for Rick, he is a domesticated dropout, dispensing robotlike pieties to his parents, gulping down their food, and, for the rest, concentrating on his guitar and the seduction of not-too-nice girls. At first, they cannot accept David's blindness; later, they cannot tolerate what he keeps seeing with his mind's eye. Neither by persuasive eloquence, nor by shock tactics, can he penetrate their carapace of obtuseness; when they summon the smarmily unorthodox Father Donald to cure him, David finally sets on him with his blind man's cane. In the end, the family prevails with a stratagem that may push black comedy a little too far: they provide David with a razor and basin and make him slit one of his wrists. While he bleeds to a state of semi-death, they settle down to their chattily pointless daily existence.

The play functions on three levels. There is a kind of heightened realism much striven for by Arthur Miller, but more successfully managed by Rabe. Here, for example, belong Ozzie's reminiscences about the great runner he once was (with a double entendre, no doubt, implied), and his repeated references to Hank, a friend we never see, whose archetypal American values and success drive Ozzie to admiration, envy, and despair. Here, too, belong the outbursts of vindictiveness and castration that flash forth from below Harriet's placid kitchen-and-church surface. The next level is that of adroit black comedy (except for that final scene), and includes Rick's larger-than-life stupidity and Father Donald's supposedly enlightened obscurantism, and any number of ferociously funny scenes and speeches. Lastly, there is a level intended to be pure poetry for David's scenes of painful self-searching and despair at his family; here the writing fails to rise to its intentions: "And then I knew that I was not awake but asleep, and in my sleep there was nothing and nothing"; or "The seasons will amaze . . . Texas is enormous;

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Ohio is sometimes green." Most disturbingly, the transitions between any two of these three modes are at times precipitous and jarring. And Rabe is youthfully prodigal of good ideas insufficiently worked out: he brings the Vietnamese girl David left behind onstage as a ghostly image that follows David around rather fitfully; except at the very end, the figure does not yield anywhere near its dramatic potential.

But the people live and the dialogue works because Rabe is aware of all the tics, absurdities and sadnesses that go into the making of his characters: he does not limit himself to the most obvious imbecilities or nastinesses to be punctured one after the other. Even pigheadedness is allowed to have its pathos. The recital of the horrors of war does not quite come off, though there is a powerful scene in which David projects what he sees as a film of the ravages of war, but the family and we perceive as blank frames coming from the projector, except for here and there a greenish spot. Throughout, the atmosphere of specious solicitude covering up genuine self-absorption is expertly caught. But the real strength of the play lies in its ability to satirize fiercely without losing a residue of sympathy and even compassion—except, perhaps, for the priest, of whom Harriet says "I called Father Donald seven times and he never answered. He's beginning to act like Jesus Christ: you call him and you never hear from him!" Rabe attacks with wit, passion, fury turning into despair, but not with hate and still less with modish self-righteousness.

The production is up to the play except for David Selby's somewhat monotonous David, with an unpleasing whine in his voice. Tom Aldredge overdoes Ozzie, but has the right basic quality; Elizabeth Wilson's Harriet and Cliff de Young's Rick are perfect; the others are more than adequate to lesser roles. Santo Loquasto's set manages to be simple and yet not tasteful, which is absolutely right here, and Jeff Bleckner has directed a trifle too frenziedly but with great clarity and authority.

The other happy event is Steve Tesich's *Lake of the Woods* at the American Place Theatre, where one major mistake has been made: Tesich's full-length play is preceded by a one-acter by Ronald Ribman, *Fingernails Blue as Flowers,* a smug piece of watered-down Ionesco, vaguely similar in subject to the Tesich play, but miles below it in quality. Nevertheless, it manages to weaken the impact of *Lake of the Woods,* which should have been allowed to stand by itself. *Lake* concerns a typical megalopolitan advertising man whose vacation and automobile bring him to a touted scenic resort, Lake of the Woods. His retinue consists of a faded, put-upon wife, a catatonic daughter, and a sassy houseboy. There are no woods and there is no lake; all that is left is a sign reading "Lake of the Woods," an outdoor grill, and a sandy wasteland. A discarded

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handbill announces that a rock festival is about to take place here, and at one point a scraggly straggler of a rock musician does wander on, only to pass out promptly. A faintly comic, faintly ominous old forest ranger appears and disappears periodically. For the most part, Winnebago, the hero, argues with his houseboy, who also disappears from time to time, leaving Winnie to argue with himself. Winnie's wife, Juanita, comes and goes disconsolately between the dried-up lake and the dried-up daughter in the trailer. Eventually, some offstage rock musicians dismantle the trailer and strip Winnie of everything; but a night of self-communion has regenerated him. He turns the shield reading "Lake of the Woods" into a stretcher on which he and Juanita carry their daughter, with the grumbling houseboy loaded down with camping equipment, their last possessions, bringing up the rear. Winnie is leading them to whatever green wilderness may still be left. The houseboy gripes, Juanita is weary and worried, the daughter lost to the world; but Winnie is indomitably hopeful: after a night of sarcasm, rant, distraught questioning, righteous indignation, soul-searching and running around in circles he has fought his way into a new-found sanguineness.

The point of the play is simple and unremarkable—except perhaps in its unexpected plea for a hope born of despair, when most of contemporary theatre prefers fashionable despondency. What is outstanding is the dialogue, which manages to go from outrageous farce to gravity and even sadness—though still laced with spurts of absurdist humor—to end on a note of striving onward. The positive note may not be entirely earned by the foregoing demonstration, but is at least in the tradition of this Midsummer-Night's-Dream kind of play, where a night spent in a haunted and haunting place turns you into someone happier and better. Tesich skillfuly manages the transitions between moods and their partial interpenetration, so that the almost ghostly forest ranger and quite trivial rock musician manage to inhabit the same theatrical world without splitting it in two.

The comic dialogue ripples along: "There was supposed to be a lake here." "There probably was; the hole is still here." "It's not a hole, but it's not a garden of Eden either." "What is it then?" "Something in between." "Something in between is always a hole." And the comic monologues are no less fluent, as when Winnie, in the middle of that sandy waste, feels an ant crawl up him: "An ant! Other people run into deer and elk and black and brown bears. I run into an ant. It's probably the same one that has been following me since Kansas. I wonder where," he adds with reference to other previous encounters, "his friends the fly and mosquito are?" Tesich can toss off a well-turned phrase, as when he describes tourists confronting the fauna: "They surround the pooor beast and shoot it full of film"; and he can be just as effective with a simple non sequitur: "But, as

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my poor father said just before he died, 'So what?' " Yet what I like most about *Lake of the Woods* is that it makes Winnie's improbable conversion almost believable; that it finds a way of making idealism more attractive than cynicism by keeping it unsentimental; and that, in Winnebago, it gives us a character of stature whom we can remember with affection.

Frederick Rolf has staged the play competently against Kert Lundell's rather too literal scenery. The acting is very creditable, with Armand Assanto doing a particularly fine job as the houseboy, an emblematically confused youth of our times wavering between crassness and decency, between dropping out and pitching in. And Hal Holbrook, an actor whom I previously found mediocre, seizes the long and taxing role of Winnie, and makes him funny, moving and real in a performance as intense and many-sided as I have seen in a long, long time. *Lake of the Woods* is even more original than Tesich's trenchant previous play, *The Carpenters,* done last season by APT. If Tesich and Rabe continue to develop as they promise to, America will soon have two genuine new playwrights, and *two* swallows just might make a summer.

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VERNON YOUNG

Film Chronicle: Natural and Unnatural History

As I WATCHED *The Hellstrom Chronicle,* the semi-documentary warning us that we are making the globe safe only for the unkillable ants and their kindred, I couldn't help thinking that this film was, after all, an essentially Hollywood product, despite the uncompromising pessimism of its certified-by-science message. If the boys west of Pasadena can produce an argument from nature (in truth nothing but Darwinism revisited) that blind instinct and species' self-interest rule the chronology of life, this makes it all the easier for them to turn the screw on their competitors and corrupt their captive audience with an easy conscience; it gives them a green light for any exhibition of violence or pornography they want to dish up, ratified by a doctrinal defense of our dirty fundamental drives. What makes the bite in this film doubly biting—and pushes it to the margin of the resistable—is the histrionic relish with which the actor playing the composite "Hellstrom" delivers his unconsoling message. Mr. Pressman has one of those wide, weak self-hating mouths for which he over-compensates by distorting it into a semblance of cruel resolution. As he informs us, with a laborious attempt at pained irony, that we shall be succeeded on the earth we ravish by no members of our own breed, nor by the little russet foxes, nor by the romping seals nor the nesting fowls, nor, even, by the padding cougar, but by *insects* (nasty, brutish, Lilliputian and immortal) he gloats—as if he would sell his soul to be there at that hour and watch all of us perish in our impotence while the termites and the driver ants flourish like the green bay trees they will have long since devoured.

The Walt Disney world turned inside out. If Disney can repudiate the insinuations of his wild-life films—that all of us live by the death of others—by cute-ing up his narration and music and washing out the struggle for existence with a Malibu-type sunset—Wolper Brothers will do just the opposite: remind us that as a species we are doomed if we don't solve the pollution problem correctly, then induce nightmares by revealing who will inherit our world—as if *that* could possibly concern us if *we* are not going to!

The *material* of this film, created by a host of valiant photographers whose several identities are inescapably lost in a bramble of credits, is —no argument—sensational; beautiful, with the macabre nuance of that word and, to say coldly, edifying. We have seen *some* of these murderous underleaf spectacles before but seldom photographed with

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such implacable precision and in such disturbingly radiant color. The editing of the camera art is analytical, the witness point is consistently on the very threshold of nature's terrible little secrets and from time to time David Seltzer's portentous script sounds an authentically baroque note—"forms as limitless as the imagination of the insane"—or a plausibly dry conclusiveness, as when describing "the perfect society" of the bees: "the fate of each is the destiny of all." The cobra plant devouring its prey in a soft tentacular embrace and the black-widow spider trussing up her exhausted mate should be salutary correctives to our sexual conceit and definitive answers—though we had others—to the Womens' Lib movement. Appropriately photographed in *red* are the communistic harvester ants, and among other images and tropes that should inhabit our cinema memory for a lifetime is that of the lunar moth, transmitting its sexual perfume across thirty miles of territory (significantly, I thought, the night landscape chosen for this illustration was that of Los Angeles County!); the jumping spider with his phallus in his foreleg (one's mind stammers); clouds of locusts like leaflets scattered by an airplane, suddenly empowered with the talent for swallowing nations of foliage; a fabulous sequence featuring an officious, one might even say sardonic, spider—to the accompaniment of Bach—spinning a symmetrical and dazzling web with the celerity and confidence of Picasso sketching a profile; and the grand denouement, no doubt cited by everyone who leaves the film, shuddering and sobbing: a legion of driver ants advancing across an African waste, as relentless as a hydra-headed vacuum cleaner, ingorging *everything* alive in its path: caterpillar, tarantula, scorpion and dog-size lizard; we have no doubt that if a herd of elephants couldn't for some reason escape their line of progress it would suffer the same fate within a quarter of an hour.

Yes, it makes you think—at night! I wish my old friend Tom Hardy had been there to see it all. . . . Yet, if I may for a moment belittle the neat lugubrious thesis, I'd like to suggest that ironic as it may be that the insect is the one form of life immune to our chemical destructive powers so that we are, in effect, until we learn better, waging war with an unkillable foe and poisoning only ourselves, the even more frightening prospect would be a world in which, having, let's say, destroyed our own social surround and having killed off all the animals, birds and fish, *we* managed to survive, *sole company with the insects!*

To see Pasolini's *Medea* in close juxtaposition with *The Hellstrom Chronicle,* as I happened to, is to be diverted, not to say downcast, by the speculation that simultaneously you are viewing the future of man as well as his remote past! Pasolini's setting (somewhere in the Near East, though it reminded me, except for the coastal shots, of southern Utah and Navaho country), at once sublime and infernal, suggests a physiography for the shape of things to come which may

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well take the same shape as things that have gone, in what we are pleased to call antiquity. Here is a landscape, pitted like old bones, long since denuded of neighboring animal life by armies of ants, you are free to imagine, upon which, after a few centuries, stubbornly surviving man has reclaimed a foothold, like the dwarf bush which is the only verdant growth in sight; as in his former proto-cultural past he is again, of course, a barbarian, a blood-drinker, a superstitious clansman with a society of sorts, either clustered in nervous security within towns that look like hornets' nests, under the rule of a local tyrant, or living by plunder and telling magnificent lies about it which will eventually be collected and sung by a Homer yet to be born.

Unless you have refreshed your memory of the Jason-Medea variants before seeing this film you will be distinctly puzzled by the story line (Euripides' *Medea,* by itself, won't help much, for it recounts only the closing episodes); since you will be puzzled anyway, my advice is to ignore whatever sources of vestigial history and myth you have retained; they won't take you far with the events of the story as Pasolini treats them. His intention seems to have been to re-create in poetic, not expository, terms, the raw material on which the separate histories of Jason and Medea were based and later fused. He leaves the material raw, which gives force to his presentation; the poetry is in the imagination with which he has *placed* his action and, as much as anything else (beside of course the photo-splendor), in the peculiar rhythm of the film, characterized by long, virtually silent cadences and, periodically, closeup flares of violence.

This is *not* a modernization; nobody will accuse Pasolini of having "psychologized" his sources. You accept what happens and yours not to wonder why. Creatures, barely human to our spoiled sense, and but casually differentiated, drift and wail across bizarre landscapes, sail across lonely stretches of aquamarine sea (Jason's *Argos,* allegedly the first war galley built, is here no more than a deep-sea raft), and hack their bretheren to pieces for reasons so well established in their doctrines and rituals that the ceremonial itself—as Pasolini, following their style, depicts it—appears matter-of-fact. The total effect, then, is mindless and harsh, often mystifying, sometimes absurd (that centaur is a farce), far from elevating but consistently beautiful and weird; most of the way it does convince us that we are being confronted by a rightly unreasonable facsimile of the abyss of time in which the actualities behind our classics of gods and heroes took place.[1] At intervals the spectacle is funny, if only because we are mercifully

[1] I should speak for myself. Conviction in these matters is in ratio to one's ignorance. I found myself persuaded because the nature of the rituals, the pitch of the music, the style of the clothing, the landscape, naturally, and certain working details (as when an Argonaut revives a dying fire by blowing into it through a bamboo reed) created *for me* a unity of impression. Specialists, such as historians of costume or archaeologists, might for all I know be outraged by solecisms unnoticeable to the rest of us and hence unhappily removed from gullible participation.

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unprepared—despite newsreels from Belsen and Vietnam—to accept enactments of human vivisection in the theatre, so to speak. I saw the film with an Italian Institute audience, most of whom audibly quailed at the blood-sacrifice early in the film, where a smiling, favored young man is brutally, if swiftly, dispatched by neck-breaking and dismemberment, after which his organs and blood are distributed among the eagerly awaiting throng, bowls out-thrust. But when Medea halts in her flight with Jason and his Argonauts, after stealing the fleece, and abruptly chops her brother Absyrtos into cutlets within the confined space of her chariot, horror gave way to laughter. One reason for this reaction was, I think, the inexplicable nature of the deed to those who hadn't the night before crammed their Bulfinch or their Frazer or their Murray. Probably they were in ignorance that Absyrtos *was* her brother and it certainly couldn't have been clear to them until later on that when Medea scatters the boys' limbs over the landscape she is slowing down their pursuit by Aeetes who will obviously stop long enough to gather and identify the freshly butchered remains of his son.

Medea is the only personage in the movie. Jason is just a smiling copulator, mysteriously dedicated to a mission which engages his enterprise but is never accounted for in his character. The climax at Corinth is unsatisfying, except to the *eyes,* since Jason's desertion of Medea, his marriage to Glauce and the misery of Medea's outcast status are no more particularized than they are in the classical versions. Little time is wasted on Creon who had much the same bearing and speech as a Neapolitan bicycle thief discovered by De Sica. Medea dominates, first and last. I suspect that when Pasolini chose Maria Callas for the role he was therewith committed, up to his neck, incapable of slighting her even if he had thought of doing so. He could have made a full-length movie with her alone, posed against a multitude of chromatic backgrounds, and it would have been fascinating. (She would have enjoyed that, too.) She was designed to embody lust and witchcraft and her skin was intended for the color camera: it has rose tints that glow in tune with the varying densities of mineral-hued spaces in which she is framed. And her large-orbit, purple-shadowed eyes, as she watches a blood-ceremony or performs one herself, or waits with demonic impatience for the moon to occupy dead center in a "window" gap, or for the sun to rise (a signal for her slaughter of the children) are fantastically occult and expressive. Those eyes are superbly featured in the three represented moments of sexual union with Jason. In the first two, passionately feeding though she is, she is wide awake to the world, and Pasolini's camera concentrates on a single vigilant eye (the other in shadow), still untrustful of Jason, even in the intimate act. But at the end of the film when she seduces him for the last time, knowing that she now has nothing to fear from him (she will conquer by killing

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his wife and his two children), her face surrenders without stint to her body's hunger: *the eye closes;* when it is again photographed, alert, Medea is simply staring, in the curiosity of aftermath, at the maleness of Jason by which she has been launched into a final ecstasy and the substance of which she has laid a curse upon.

This is the first Pasolini film by which I have been impressed; it seemed to me to reach, with passion and startling beauty, what Jeffers has memorably called, in another context, "the coast opposite humanity." Heretofore I have found Pasolini tiresomely addicted to propaganda—for a form of mystical Communism I want no truck with —perversely devoted to musical effects and visual symbols *imposed* upon his subject, and incredibly attentive to young male actors whose charms were far from cogent in my sense of things! None of these vices are apparent in *Medea.* While the film is not free, as I've said, from a certain indifference towards narrative lucidity (to this moment I don't understand why Glauce's death was pictured twice, once by fire, once by her leaping from the battlements), it was an ambitious project to attempt, a worthwhile subject with which to tempt disaster and, for my part, an experience of vital scenic imagination I shall long remember.

The Falcons, directed by István Gaál (Hungary, 1970) is the only story film of my recent memory as unique as *Medea;* one of the most intelligent films I have seen ever. The spirit is closer to the world of D. H. Lawrence than that of any film actually made from a story by Lawrence!—and this is wholly the director's doing; he also wrote the film script; the original is something other, as I shall later disclose. . . . Far from the city, on the great Hungarian plain, where wind and sky, the one incessant, the other blinding, are most of nature, lies a research station where falcons and falconers are trained, run as a primitive utopia by the man, Lilik, a disciplinarian, a fanatic of the art, a *condottiere* out of time, a poet on horseback whose self-assured poems are written on the sky by the predatory birds he governs with a loving hand of iron. He governs his men the same way—and his woman, Teresz, whom he shares with them when he feels generous; or too tired; or after a quarrel with her; or when he's absent, which is understood by all—and *she* makes her choice. She's on a leash, a strap as it's known in falconry, long enough so that she doesn't chafe or get numb, not so long that she can wander and perish (which is what happens to a "hobby" during a flood; the bird is drowned, tangled in its strap). "When you allow too long a strap, you have anarchy," explains Lilik.

Into this model dictatorship comes a Young Man (not otherwise named) sent from the city to observe and study falconry as a means of conservation. When he and Lilik meet at the train and ride back into falcon territory, each measuring the moral heft of the other, Lilik

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glances with light scorn at the humming power-lines overhead, recalling that a female journalist had loved the music of the wires. "Music!" he grunts. "They trap my falcons!" The boy is soon bewildered by his new experience, alienated by the austere conditions and the authoritarian ethic. He feels his city-bred inconsequence, staked out on a plain where his identity finds no echo; he's almost more shocked than pleased when Teresz offers to go to bed with him (hospitality towards the new apprentice), explaining the tacit rules whereby, if she enjoys him enough, he will share her favors again when his turn comes. To him, sex is ego; if Teresz selects him it must be because she *prefers* him. He, also, hears music in those wires. Exhilarated, for an hour, by the men being trained, on foot and horse, to "toss" the falcon from wrist to wrist, he is shortly depressed and repelled by what he construes as the cruelty of it all: the needless maiming of a heron, torn and bleeding from the talons of a "saker"; the pursuit of a magpie by Lilik's favorite peregrine, urged on by its master to kill, while the magpie, in flapping terror, darts among the pigs in the yard, skimming the ground and trying vainly to breach a haystack for safe cover.

Lilik, with no success, though he is hardly aware of the youngster's indifference, so secure is he in his own inspiration, explains with a professional's pride the scheme of things in which the practise of falconry plays its part, the imbalance of nature which demands correction, the rules of survival, the hostages who preserve the web within which we are all suspended. Shortly put: falcons are trained to hunt the waterfowls that deplete the fish that feed the men. Our boy wants nothing of it; he's from a society that thinks it has made an easier and kinder bargain. When Lilik instructs him to lie in a shallow trench under the glaring sky, covered with grass blankets, a tube in his mouth for breathing, his outstretched hands holding a pigeon (a strategy for luring back a favored falcon which had escaped), the "observer" is at breaking point. The falcon does drop to the kill and the youth grabs him, as advised, high on the legs, but in a sudden access of disgust sets the bird free, later telling Lilik that no falcon returned. Teresz smells failure on him, by instinct, and pointedly goes to bed with another. Unable to believe that she is indifferent to him, he tells her in an outburst of resentment that she is distorting her feelings, that she lies about her contentment with the Lilik domain; she is *not* satisfied "to serve and feed," as she had put it. Her only answer to his vehemence is, "I'm sorry I disturbed you." At dawn, the boy runs away. Teresz, seeing him go, weakens for a confused moment, moves as if to follow him. In the morning darkness of the compound, Lilik's voice commands: "Bring meat. And two pigeons." She drops her head; she obeys the pull of the strap. The boy runs through mist to the train. Overhead the power lines hum.

My interpretation—I may have nudged a bit—is justified, I think,

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by the emphasis which István Gaál clearly places on the interrelationships of the three characters who alone *express* the burden of meaning within the symbolizing environment. Many months after seeing the film, I found the original story, by Miklos Meszoly (dated 1956), in *The New Hungarian Quarterly* (XI -40, Winter 1970) and discovered that it was patently constructed as an anti-totalitarian parable. Although the esoterica of falconry is expounded with expert knowledge and a wealth of love, the art of it all is employed as an analogy with the ruses of political suppression. Among many, here is a characteristic example of the *double entendre:*

> The really hard schooling comes when the falcon has to fly back and leave her prey; back to the small dot that is the falconer's hand; then have the leather hood placed over her head, bringing the kind darkness in which she is unaware of anything except a sense of security. This is really one of the advanced exercises, based on psychology, but always with an element of risk; often only a hair's breadth keeps a falcon from rebelling against the command.

The continuity is narrated by the young man, as passive as his screen counterpart but expressing no opinion on what he observes at the research station; describing the operations minutely, he soft-pressures the reader into taking his own implicitly negative view of the intricate fabric sustained and defended by Lilik, who is as dedicated, as genial and as imposing as the actor in the movie makes him out. *There is no woman in the story!* If you have already seen the film, this at once removes a whole dimension of equivocal feeling and implications! As in the screen version, the boy runs away after his ordeal on the plain and there, at the railroad station, the story might have ended. But no—Meszoly must underscore the point which the reader might have been permitted to grasp for himself—it was sufficiently visible. After a row of asterisks, the tyranny of the explicit. The boy watches a sealed cattle-truck go by, one flat-car bearing a muscular guard with a machine-gun. Then the passenger train arrives, "not a moment too late," and the story ends, as more nails are driven through our ears:

> In the well-lit restaurant car, there was a table for me, with a white tablecloth, mineral water, quiet and polite service; a menu on the table, and I could choose anything I happened to fancy.

What I found even more astounding, however: in the same issue of this quarterly was a brief—and I do mean *brief*—review, ostensibly of the *film,* yet the reviewer, Istvan Nemeskürty, said *nothing whatever* about the profound difference in tone between the tale itself and Gaál's more complex and shaded treatment—and *nothing whatever* of Gaál's invention of Teresz! His principal efforts were spent in assuring the viewer, by reference to the story, not the film, that the

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"research station" was a feudal institution and that Lilik's talk about the imbalance of nature was purely a rationalization for his desire to practise falconry, which had in fact no social utility.

Questions clamor. Since this story was written before the "thaw," might Meszoly have been later "invited" to dress the ending of his narrative for Western consumption? Would that account for Nemeskürty's reluctance to involve himself in troublesome comparisons? What is Meszoly's view of Gaál's movie? What is István Gaál's political status? Was *The Falcons* controversial or buried? I do not expect an answer to my questions: not from that neck of the woods.

All I know for certain is that Gaál is a movie-maker to keep track of (Operation Slippery). *Whirlpool* (1964) is the only other film of his I've seen, about the unobserved drowning of a young man at a swimming party and the effect it has on the friends who were with him: not especially cogent but sensitive, sad, attractive and definitely made by a man of ironic temper. And *The Falcons,* as that man directed it, is no easy celebration of the boy who runs away. I repeat, it's the Lawrence ethos: the rigors of the impersonal contracted life, presented as a challenge to the civilised stripling, all nerves and enlightenment, who has not chosen the liberty he prefers and who is, if the truth be faced, when confronted by Lilik, as by Teresz, a fraction of a man. Whatever your personal judgment of this aspect, the film is rich: it's in color, the falconry stuff is wonderful, Gyorgy Bánffy as Lilik is prodigious—did they train a falconer to *act* or teach an actor to handle the birds as if born to them?—and Teresz (Judit Meszléri) is food for the gourmand, to be eaten slowly, but with a large spoon.

Photographs on page 1 from *The Hellstrom Chronicle,* pages 2 and 3 from *Medea,* page 4 from *The Falcons.*

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B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

In a *New York Times Magazine* article about the remarkable 26-year-old conductor Michael Tilson Thomas, Leonard Bernstein was reported to have said to Thomas on one occasion, "You're *me* at that age"—which fortunately was not true. What Bernstein had in mind was the fact that young Thomas, like the young Bernstein, had the gifts which enabled him, without rehearsal, to substitute effectively for William Steinberg in the second half of a Boston Symphony concert, as Bernstein had substituted for Bruno Walter in 1943. But with this similarity there are dissimilarities which make Thomas's operation and the performances it produces strikingly different from the young Bernstein's. And this difference provides an occasion to point out that the mere possession of gifts—even gifts as impressive as Bernstein's—doesn't guarantee value in what they produce. It isn't only Bernstein who has demonstrated this: before him it was demonstrated by the even more impressively gifted Stokowski; and now it is being demonstrated by the far less impressively gifted Barenboim.

Gifts must be used; and value in the result depends on how they are used—more specifically, whether the use is controlled by the discipline that is the rarest of artistic gifts, and the crucial one. A couple of years ago, as the great ensemble pianist Franz Rupp listened to a tape of Michael Rogers's performance of Schumann's Fantasy Op. 17, he turned to me repeatedly to nod his appreciation of how Rogers, in an acceleration of tempo or a build-up of intensity, had sensed exactly where to begin to slow down the one or diminish the other. The discipline that manifested itself as a sense for measure and proportion in such details revealed itself further in the conceptual grasp of the movement as a whole in which all the details were in such correctly proportioned relation, and in the control which held the fingers to the realization of the detail of this imagined whole in the emerging shape in sound. An outstanding example of this disciplined operation can be heard on the new RCA record with Cliburn's tremendous performance of Beethoven's *Appassionata* Sonata; and it is especially impressive for anyone who heard Barenboim's undisciplined performance of the work a few years ago—its preoccupation with the detail of the moment without regard for the moments before and after, and, as a result, the crescendos that were too violent, the retardations that lingered too long, the pauses that were too great, the *Andante con moto* theme of the variation movement that was too slow, the first variation that was too fast after the slow theme, and so on.

As with Barenboim, so with Bernstein. I recall a Bernstein perform-

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ance of Mahler's Second years ago in which—at the point in the *Andante moderato* second movement where the lilting opening section returns with a new countermelody of the cellos—Bernstein, giving all his attention to the countermelody and visibly demonstrating his intense feeling about it, lingered over it without regard for the fact that the slowing down destroyed the lilt of the section and its forward momentum. This was one of the countless times when the lack of discipline evident in the platform exhibitionist's demonstration of his intense emotional involvement with the music showed itself also in details of performance that were not in coherent relation with their context. And I cannot imagine anything more strikingly unlike all this than the unfailingly disciplined operation of young Thomas that produces the coherently related details of the emerging shape in sound in his performance, and that is evident in his manner of producing them with the orchestra, concerning which one can say what W. J. Turner said about Toscanini's conducting—that it exhibits "no trace whatever . . . of display, or showmanship, or self-consciousness. It is absolutely direct." Thomas's involvement with the music is something one has to infer from his complete and intense concentration on his task.

The discipline I've been talking about is what is usually referred to as taste; and the difference between Thomas and Bernstein is that Thomas's performances have exhibited an unfailing musical taste which the young Bernstein didn't have at the beginning and the older Bernstein didn't acquire.[1] That is the answer to those who hear in Barenboim's performances the failings of immaturity which experience will eradicate: I can't see Barenboim's lack of discipline correcting itself anymore than Bernstein's did.

Thomas has told an interviewer, "I like to hear things I have never heard before"; and what he likes to hear he likes to perform for others—which is unfortunate for the people who attend concerts to hear music worth hearing, and would want even the out-of-the-way music on a program to be works of value, like the infrequently played Symphony K.338 of Mozart of which Thomas produced a marvelously paced and phrased performance with the New York Philharmonic, or works of interest like the *Seven Early Songs* of Alban Berg that preceded the Mozart symphony, and not Ruth Crawford's Andante for String Orchestra, an arrangement of a movement of a string quartet which the program described as "long admired by musicians," but in which I found nothing to admire, or Carl Ruggles's *Men and Mountains,* which I found as uninteresting now as at its première in 1924.

[1] Nevertheless it was inevitable that the immaturity ploy would be used with Thomas; and the perfectly conceived and perfectly achieved performance of Tchaikovsky's engaging but unprofound Symphony No. 1 he recorded with the Boston Symphony provided Irving Kolodin with the opportunity to demonstrate his possession of the experienced ear and mature mind that could detect the inadequacies and failures of youth: "There are, understandably, rawness, unfinished edges, a tendency to ride not merely the surface but the surface of the surface rather than to dig into the underlying substance."

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Fortunately the Crawford and Ruggles pieces were quite brief; and before them there was a fine performance of several movements from Handel's *Water Music*. The highly individual and dynamic Sinfonia in D of C. P. E. Bach on Thomas's second Philharmonic program was another excellent out-of-the-way choice, which I was prevented from hearing by other works on the program—Liszt's Fantasy on Beethoven's *Ruins of Athens* and Borodin's Symphony No. 2.

The Liszt fantasy and Berg songs conformed to the program scheme devised for the Philharmonic season by the orchestra's musical director, Pierre Boulez, for whom programs are not the simple matter they may appear to be to the people who attend the concerts, but are complicated by Boulez's thinking on the subject. He thinks, for example, that just as a museum doesn't limit itself to Rembrandt's masterpieces but exhibits "other paintings of the same period that form the background to his work and help you to understand more precisely why that particular work [of Rembrandt] is a real masterpiece," so the concert should offer Telemann as well as Bach—to which one can answer that the greatness of Bach's D-minor Concerto for clavier is apprehended directly from that concerto and only from that concerto, not from anything outside of it, not even from Bach's own uninteresting Clavier Concerto in F minor, and certainly not from the boring concertos of Telemann; so that there is no need of being bored at a concert by Telemann to be excited by the D-minor of Bach. It is clear the Boulez is not, like E. M. Forster, interested in the particular work of art considered and experienced as an entity for the life that can be perceived in it; and this appears again in his contention that an orchestra's season should not be like a series of individual menus of which one recalls particular works and performances, but should have an over-all profile that stays in one's memory, "so that one can say, ah yes, that was the year of so and so." For the New York Philharmonic, then, this was to be the year of Liszt and Berg—the unfamiliar works of each that Boulez apparently felt would cause the Philharmonic audiences to recall the season with pleasure. In theory one welcomes the opportunity to hear a work by a famous composer that one hasn't heard; in practice one is guided by one's feeling about the works of his that one *has* heard; and the considerable amount of Liszt's music I had heard, not only the trashy exhibitionistic pieces for piano but some of the attempts at serious writing, had given me the view I discovered Bernard Shaw had expressed—in the statement that "[Liszt's] devotion to serious composition seems as hopeless a struggle against natural incapacity as Benjamin Haydon's determination to be a great painter"—and a strong disinclination to hear more. As it happened, Shaw's statement was occasioned by his hearing the oratorio *St. Elizabeth* and the *Dante Symphony*, two of the works of Liszt that Boulez thought Philharmonic audiences should hear, and that I, for one, thought I could leave unheard. I cannot imagine the people in those audiences recalling with pleasure some day that this was the year of Liszt.

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The music of Arnold Schönberg I had heard also had left me with the feeling that I had heard enough; but so much had been made of his opera *Moses and Aaron* in the reports of the performances staged at Covent Garden and by Sarah Caldwell's Boston Opera a few years ago that I thought I should hear the Chicago Symphony's performance under Solti at one of their Carnegie Hall concerts, on the chance that it really was the powerful and moving work it had been reported to be. But it turned out instead to be only more—much more, too much more—of the kind of writing I had heard before, wasting the capacities and energies of the superb conductor and orchestra, the excellent choral groups and vocal soloists, in the production of two hours of sounds elaborately contrived to be pointlessly ugly.

The concert of the New Jersey Symphony in the Carnegie Hall Festival of Visiting Orchestras opened with a performance of Brahms's Third which offered precise and beautiful-sounding playing by the orchestra, but suffered from Henry Lewis's inability to set and modify tempo in a way that would hold a movement together in a coherent progression. However Brahms's boring Alto Rhapsody was enlivened by the singing of Marilyn Horne, whose extraordinary voice exhibited the beginning of deterioration in the thinness and coldness of its highest range in place of the opulent beauty it retained below that range, and who deployed it in the sustained phrases with her impressive sense for shape and style. And in the four excerpts from Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* this sense for shape and style operating in her astoundingly accurate execution of florid passages achieved the exciting singing of the evening. Unfortunately it was heard in the disturbing context of the bad singing of the other participants—above all the varieties of unpleasant sound produced by Patricia Brooks and her painful struggles with florid passages.

The New York City Opera's new *Carmen* is still another of the monstrosities produced in recent years by director-designer teams who have considered their task to be recreative renewal of old operas with their new insights realized in innovations in staging that would make the works unrecognizable and, I am sure, unacceptable to their original creators. Thus, Jose Varona devised for the first act of *Carmen* a stage-filling clutter of new scenic details which obscured the essentials of the scene specified in the libretto, but which made possible the unending counterpoint of happenings thought up by Tito Capobianco that drew attention away from the essential action and singing of the principals —one example being the corner of a house that Varona placed in the center, with a balcony on which Capobianco placed an old woman engaged in some handiwork who every now and then got involved with a person on the stage. Other such innovations included the commanding officer of the relief guard entering on a horse, and Carmen making her first entrance barefoot on a mule; but although able to think up unnecessary details of that kind, Capobianco was unable to deal compe-

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tently with essentials, such as the fight between the two groups of factory girls, which provoked laughter even from the undemanding opera audience, or Joy Davidson's dramatic operation as Carmen, which made me laugh when the audience was impressed. Her voice, moreover, and her use of it were as undisciplined as her acting, contributing to the musical deficiencies of the production that began even before the curtain rose with Julius Rudel's whipping up of the Prelude, and continued with his coarse-grained treatment of the music thereafter. Michele Molese's Don Jose helped neither the dramatic nor the musical performance; but Joanna Bruno, the Micaela, looked like a young village girl and used her fresh voice with musical taste; and Robert Hale was an excellent Escamillo.

On the other hand the production of Britten's operatic comedy *Albert Herring* was one of the company's all too rare successes—as the work is one of Britten's. He is England's one outstandingly gifted composer; but the gift that is most evident is the resourceful craftsmanship that, like Bach's, can produce writing which goes through the motions of saying something but actually says nothing—writing which, in W. J. Turner's words about Bach, is not "as expressive as it is accomplished." *Albert Herring* has such arid writing which merely carries the words and action without any expressive relation to either—a notable example being the love duet of Sid and Nancy overheard by Albert in the second act. But at a number of points there is real and brilliantly successful invention for the words and dramatic situation—like Lady Billows's grand announcement to Albert of his election to be King of the May, Miss Wordsworth's rehearsal of the children's song of homage for the coronation party, the speeches at the party, the dirge for the supposedly dead Albert. In these the music heightens the effect of Eric Crozier's words; and his delightful libretto amuses one in some of the other places where Britten's music does not.

The performance I attended—conducted by Mario Bernardi, with Gary Glaze (Albert), Eunice Alberts (Mrs. Herring), Ruth Welting (Miss Wordsworth), Thomas Jamerson (the Vicar), John Lankston (the Mayor), Richard Gill (the superintendent of the Constabulary), Dominic Cossa (Sid), Kay Creed (Nancy) and Beverly Evans (Lady Billows's housekeeper)—was a very good one even without the right singer for Lady Billows. She must be excessively grand in appearance and manner, and able to proclaim the high notes of her announcement to Albert with assurance; and all this was true of Ellen Faull in the première at Tanglewood in 1949, but not of the New York City Opera's Judith Anthony, who was unimpressively dumpy and shrewish, and whose high notes in the announcement to Albert were strident screams. Her deficiencies were emphasized by her first-act costume; but Lloyd Evans's other costumes and his sets were good, and Anthony Besch's stage direction was effective.

Edwin Sherin's direction of *Così Fan Tutte* was acceptably tradi-

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tional; but the musical performance conducted well by Jorge Mester was made ineffective by the lack of the singing—the beautiful voices deployed with security and style—and the Italian words that the music requires.

The important news about the Metropolitan is its acquisition of another remarkable young conductor, James Levine, who revealed, in a performance of Verdi's *Luisa Miller,* control, authority and discipline which held the orchestra and singers to a shaping of the music with the required Verdi *espansione* within the limits of proportion and coherence. As it happened, the performance had Placido Domingo and Adriana Maliponte singing the young lovers with fresh and beautiful voices and sensitive phrasing, in addition to adequate singing by Mario Sereni as Miller, the barely adequate singing by Bonaldo Giaiotti as Walter, and the striking Wurm of Paul Plishka.

Both the dramatic action of Weber's *Der Freischütz* and its music, which has none of the extraordinary power of the writing in his *Euryanthe,* make it a work strictly for German audiences. And the first mystery being, therefore, Mr. Bing's decision to present it to the Metropolitan's New Yorkers for whom it could have little appeal, the second was his loading it with the additional handicaps of Rudolf Heinrich's unimaginative sets and staging and Leopold Ludwig's conducting, which not only was pedestrian in its treatment of the music but managed to get the excellent orchestra to play poorly. Such a situation couldn't be saved by the good singing of Pilar Lorengar, Edith Mathis, Sandor Konya and Gerd Feldhoff.

The designer of the new *Tristan und Isolde* is Günther Schneider-Siemssen, whose idea of the bridge for *Die Walküre* into the future was the hollowed-out base of an enormous tree that he substituted in the first act for Wagner's room in Hunding's hut. This time he is content to provide for Act 1 of *Tristan* the curtained-off space on the deck of a ship that Wagner specifies—a realistic set made singularly beautiful by the translucent sails, which make possible the impressive dramatic moment when Isolde, turning, is transfixed by the silhouette of Tristan on one of them. But they make impossible Brangäne's drawing of the curtains, specified by Wagner, to reveal Tristan looking out at the sea, with Kurvenal at his feet and behind him the sailors and knights who, at the end of Brangäne's confrontation with Tristan, join in Kurvenal's offensive reply: instead Brangäne goes up to a ramp in front of the sails on which Tristan is pacing back and forth attended by Kurvenal, and Kurvenal's reply is joined, for no apparent reason, by an unseen chorus. Later the drinking of the love potion results in the disappearance of the ship of the real world in swirling colored mists in which Tristan and Isolde are seen isolated in the world of their own emotions—a new and effective handling of this difficult scene, which is, however, not enough for Schneider-Siemssen or August Everding, the stage director: the lovers' exalted emotional state must be demon-

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strated by their physical ascent to a high point in the stage space. Consistency would require them to remain at that high point while they continue the musical outpouring of their exaltation; but this would necessitate their instantaneous descent to the level of the real world at the moment when that world breaks in on them. Such an instantaneous descent is of course impossible; and what actually happens is that while the ear hears the lovers still singing at their high point of exaltation, the eye sees them descending to where they must be when their exaltation will be interrupted—which makes no sense.

This happens again in the second act. Again Schneider-Siemssen provides the scene Wagner specifies, and a beautiful one, even if a little semi-tropical for Cornwall. When the lovers begin their duet *"O sink hernieder"* the garden of the real world disappears and they are seen isolated in the world of their exalted emotional state, which again is demonstrated by their physical ascent to a high point in a space of swirling lights. And again while the ear hears the crescendo of their exaltation the eye sees them descending to where they must be when the real world will intrude itself on them. An additional detail which makes no sense is that Brangäne, who belongs to the real world that disappears during the lovers' duet, is made visible when she sings from her lookout during intervals in the duet—this in the face of Wagner's direction that she be invisible at these times.

It is only at the end of the third act that Isolde—removed from the real world to a high point in space for her final exalted utterance—can remain there to the end of that utterance, when she sinks lifeless upon Tristan's body. And this happens to be the only effective detail in the act. After the beautiful realistic sets for the first two acts Schneider-Siemssen reverts to his bridge-into-the-future style for the third, producing—in place of the castle, the garden, the tree for the wounded Tristan to lie under, the crumbling wall, the gate that Wagner specifies—an abstract construction whose two parts on the two sides of the stage, looking like the two blades of a gigantic excavator, narrow as they curve from the front of the stage to the back and center where their two narrow ends overlap. In the space between the overlapping ends are invisible steps to a ramp beyond which are the sea and sky. It is on the ramp that the characters—the Shepherd, Brangäne, King Marke, Moralt, the soldiers—have to make their entrances; and on the way down to the stage they disappear for a few moments in the space between the overlapping ends of the set. And in addition to the awkward and ineffective entrances caused by the set there are questionable details in Everding's staging. When the curtain rises Kurvenal is sitting not beside the sleeping Tristan, as Wagner and good sense direct, but on the opposite side of the stage from him; and instead of remaining by Tristan's side in their later exchanges he jumps up and away from him for each reply. If this represents William Dooley's idea rather than Everding's direction, Everding can be faulted

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for not correcting it. And the same may be said of Kurvenal's arm movements in moments of excitement that are absurdly like a bird's flapping of its wings.

Of special interest in the performance I attended was the Tristan of Helge Brilioth, in whom some had heard the promise of a new Wagnerian *Heldentenor*. His voice turned out not to be heroic either in size or in quality: it was a little dry in *piano,* rather metallic in its brighter *forte,* but without luster or warmth; and in the last act he seemed to have increasing difficulty in producing the sounds that were increasingly unpleasant. His moody Tristan of the first act and ardent Tristan of the second were dramatically effective; his delirious Tristan of the third was not. Birgit Nilsson, whom I hadn't heard in a Metropolitan performance of this work since her first season with the company, surprised me with her impressive dramatic performance in the first act—its details of smiling irony, among other things. But she surprised me even more with the best singing I had heard from her since that early *Tristan*: whereas in both of her recorded *Tristans* I had found the timbre of her voice not pleasant to listen to, at the Metropolitan now its cool, bright sound was agreeable to the ear, and in moments of great amplitude it acquired a glow and sheen. And it held out to the very end—the final exquisitely sustained "*Lust.*"

As for Erich Leinsdorf's shaping of the work, it was epitomized in his dealing with the very first statement of the Prelude, which was begun in an extremely slow tempo by the cellos, and completed in a faster tempo by the winds; his hurried shortening of the silence between this statement and the next; his similar dealing with the statements and silences that followed. I once heard Pavel Tchelitchev say to someone about her painting of a group of buildings: "It isn't only the forms that are important in a painting, but also the spaces between the forms." And one can say that for the opening section of the Prelude to *Tristan* to have coherent shape and sense it isn't only the phrases that must be exactly right in time values but also the silences between the phrases. Those time values of phrases and silences are right in Furtwängler's recorded performance, and in Toscanini's; but they were not right in Leinsdorf's performance; and his lack of the sense for tempo—the ability to set a right basic tempo and maintain it with modifications that are in right relation to it—continued to be evident in the rest of the Prelude. It was evident again in his moderately animated tempo for the Prelude to Act 3 instead of the moderately slow one prescribed by Wagner. And in the task of providing the orchestral context for the singing he was merely efficient where Furtwängler is in addition sensitive. In all it was the usual—i.e. technically proficient, musically mediocre—Leinsdorf operation; and, not surprisingly, he received the usual ovation each time he stepped onto the podium. But with the ovation before the third act there were, surprisingly, deep-throated boos from three of today's youth seated in front of me.

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Jacob Lateiner's recorded performances of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 111 and Bagatelles Op. 126 led me to expect impressive playing at his recital at Hunter College, which, as it happened, offered the Schumann Fantasy Op. 17 I spoke of earlier. And so I was unprepared for the playing in this work that was wholly without the discipline I described in Michael Rogers's performance—playing, in other words, that distorted the work with details not in correctly proportioned relation to each other. I had already been shocked by this undisciplined operation in the remarkable Schubert Impromptu Op. 90 No. 1 with which Lateiner had begun his recital; and I was shocked by it again in his performances of Chopin's Prelude No. 24, Etude Op. 10 No. 3 and Scherzo Op. 39.

On the other hand Grant Johannesen, whom I also had known only from his playing on records, produced at Hunter College the fine performances I had expected of Franck's Prelude, Chorale and Fugue, one of this composer's best works, Beethoven's Sonata Op. 10 No. 1, Chopin's deservedly unfamiliar Variations Brillantes Op. 12 and beautiful Ballade Op. 52, Copland's Piano Variations (1930), which I found as unconvincing this twentieth time as in 1930, Nos. 3 and 5 of the Preludes Op. 103 of Fauré, whose music I haven't been able to acquire a taste for, Debussy's *Masques* and *L'Isle Joyeuse,* and, as an encore, Schumann's fascinating *Der Vogel als Prophet.* My one dissatisfaction was with the program: with all the pieces by Chopin, Franck, Fauré and Debussy it hadn't offered even one major German work; and I would have preferred that instead of showing me the occasional interesting passages in Beethoven's early sonata, Johannesen had shown me what his powers could achieve with one of the great last sonatas.

The Joffrey Ballet's performance of *Petrushka* that I saw this year was improved by the excellent Petrushka of Gary Chryst and Ballerina of Rebecca Wright; and with Geoffrey Holder's Blackamoor, Yurek Lazovski's Showman and good dancers for the exciting ensembles of the last scene, the choreographed essentials that combine with Stravinsky's music in a singular and great work of art were impressive even in the context of the usual confusion of the crowd scenes on the insufficiently large stage of the City Center. The program this time credited only Lazovski with supervision of the revival; and the omission of Leonide Massine's name presumably accounted for the disappearance of a couple of choreographed crowd sequences in the first scene. This time I was able to talk afterwards with Lazovski, who confirmed my impression that the knowledge of the work he had acquired from his participation in the last productions supervised by Fokine had enabled him to stage the choreographed parts of the ballet for the Joffrey company with complete accuracy. ("I told this to Clive Barnes," he said.) The crowd scenes were another matter: they had never been choreographed by Fokine, Lazovski said; and there wasn't much a touring company could do with the supers assembled only a couple of hours before

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the performance. (Diaghilev, he said, had used for the crowd whatever members of his company were available and even personal friends.)

In the dancing of the Classical Khmer Ballet of Cambodia at the Brooklyn Academy of Music I wasn't equipped to see more than the flow of exquisitely nuanced movements of hands, arms and body executed with precision and seemingly effortless control by the richly costumed dancers to the delicate music.

Jerome Robbins's *The Concert,* first performed by the New York City Ballet in 1956, was revived in somewhat changed form last fall. Having found the series of revue sketches amusing in 1956, I was surprised to discover now how thin and trivial most of the humorous points were. I did not, as Clive Barnes did, find profound human insights embodied in the sketch about people opening their umbrellas because someone had opened his, or the sketch about the woman trying on hats and joyfully choosing one, only to be crushed by encountering another woman wearing the same hat. In 1956 I was aware that these and some of the other sketches didn't employ dancing; this time I was aware that they did not, as the note in the program alleged, embody reveries induced by the Chopin pieces played at the concert; that instead the pieces were being used—and some musicians thought misused—as mere sound tracks for the episodes thought up by Robbins. A few sketches did employ the music for dancing; and one of these was marvelously contrived and hilariously funny: a Balanchine-style number for a group of girls that was wrecked by the succession of their mistakes. The principal roles were performed effectively by Sara Leland, Francisco Moncion (exhibiting hitherto unrevealed comic powers) and Bettijane Sills.

The Concert, preceded by an excitingly beautiful *Swan Lake* with Violette Verdy and Helgi Tomasson, was followed by *Who Cares?* with Jean-Pierre Bonnefous in the D'Amboise role, in which, it turned out, he lacked the technique to do some of the D'Amboise movements at all or to do others with D'Amboise's ease, clarity and effect, and couldn't achieve anything resembling D'Amboise's smilingly relaxed style of an American hoofer that this work requires, but offered instead the intense style of a French dancer doing this kind of dancing in Paris. On the other hand, Gelsey Kirkland's first appearance in the McBride role in *Rubies* was a brilliant success. Making no attempt at McBride's power in the second-movement *pas de deux,* she danced dead-pan with a clarity and lightness that made the movements delightfully witty. And John Clifford adjusted to the scale of her performance an effective contained operation in the Villella role. In the performance of *Emeralds* on this occasion the tempo enabled Susan Hendl to point up her solo as she had not been able to do in the earlier performance, in which one had seen the excessively slow tempos destroy momentum in the opening *pas de deux* of Verdy and Ludlow and the solos of Hendl and Verdy, and reduce the solos to a slow-motion filling out of the stretched-out time.

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GERALD WEALES

The Year of the Hopper

> Art . . . must hide itself from those who would appreciate it, who would stifle it with "reactions."
> —Ted in Peter Ransley's *Ellen*

THE AMERICAN CULTURAL SCENE is a great one for occasions—for silver anniversaries and centennials, for celebrations that can be nicely pegged to key events, to births, deaths, marriages, first public success. How odd, then, that 1971 should have turned into a big Edward Hopper year, for 1971 had no neat bookkeeping point to make about the painter's career; it was the eighty-ninth anniversary of his birth, the fourth of his death, the fifty-eighth of the Armory Show, out of which he sold his first painting. It was the year in which his birthplace was declared a landmark and scheduled for restoration as a showplace for his work and for local culture—which are certainly not the same thing. Since that news from Nyack was not carried in museum catalogues and publisher's throwaways, I can only assume that the Hopper flowering was spontaneous, that it was—or ought to have been—its own occasion. The main events: two major Hopper shows and the publication of what the publisher likes to think is "the long awaited definitive work on this great American artist."[1]

The first of the shows opened on July 9 at the William A. Farnsworth Library and Art Museum in Rockland, Maine (one of the New England places where Hopper summered in the 1920's) and, much enlarged, moved on to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia on September 24.[2] It was there that I saw it. An extremely impressive show, it brought together some of the best examples of Hopper's work in all media. There was no declared purpose beyond putting Hopper on display, but occasionally I felt that the show had been designed to illustrate the artist's recurrent use of material. An early oil like *Monhegan* (c. 1916) hanging near the 1923 etching *The Lighthouse* gave that sense. If the show had been genuinely pedagogical, however, an oil more directly related to the etching, *Lighthouse Hill* (1927), would have been hanging beside it, not—as it was—in another room. Not that one needs a museum director to point out the kind of connection my mind was making. They are

1 EDWARD HOPPER. Text by *Lloyd Goodrich*. Harry N. Abrams. $50.00.

2 The show played the Farnsworth, July 9-September 5; the Academy, September 24-November 28. Catalogue: EDWARD HOPPER, 1882-1967. Introduction by *John W. McCoy*. Farnsworth. $2.50. Since McCoy's text is at once derivative and fatuous and the reproductions are all in black-and-white, the catalogue is not worth getting except as a list of the Hopper works on display.

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inevitable in any gathering of Hoppers. If I look at the etching *House on a Hill* (c. 1920) and then find it again in *The Bootleggers* (oil, c. 1925)—as I did—I am right even though it is plainly a different house, seen from a different angle. Hopper, as years of critics have said, returned again and again to the same or the same kind of material. The pleasure of the Academy show, however, did not lie in the intellectual points it let me score as I wandered through it, but in the excitement —particularly for someone who missed the big Hopper retrospective at the Whitney in 1964—of so much good Hopper in one place. Most of the etchings were there—borrowed from the Philadelphia Museum of Art—and a generous sampling of watercolors, ranging from the early, uncertainly dated *La Pierreuse* (1906? 1909?) to *California Hills* (1957). Not that either of these framing examples interests me in the way that *Cobb's House* (1942) does, or *Talbot's House* (1926). Hopper's human figures and his landscapes cannot hold me as his buildings can.

For me, though, it was the oils that made the show. Some of the major ones were missing—*Nighthawks, House by the Railroad, Early Sunday Morning*—but there were enough familiar ones—*New York Movie, Tables for Ladies*—looking surprisingly new wrenched out of the context of the museums where I ordinarily see them, and many others—*New York Pavements, Cape Cod Evening*—that I knew only from reproductions. The real discovery of the show came when I stood in the center of the large room where most of the oils hung and slowly turned around, not lingering over the pictures but hitting them glancingly as I rotated. I have read much about Hopper's use of light and of line—most of it undeniable—but I was unprepared for the variety, the force of Hopper's color. "I'm more concerned with light than color," Hopper told Katharine Kuh (in *The Artist's Voice*), but Mrs. Hopper interrupted, "You should be careful what you say about color." He topped her with "Why, because I might offend color?" On the assumption that there is substance buried in the badinage, I am about ready to move from my general impression to a specific picture, to begin to wonder whether the fascination of a painting like *Manhattan Bridge Loop* (1928) does not depend less on the much discussed horizontal structure (see Hopper's letter to Charles H. Sawyer, October 29, 1939, reprinted in the Abrams volume) than on the incredible patch of red toward the right, picked up by a lighter smudge of the same color on one of the buildings to the left. These two bright spots seem to break the horizontal flow much more effectively than the verticality of the street lamp, the steel arches, the buildings in the distance. Even as I write this, I can hear Hopper's voice, again from the Sawyer letter, "I am always repelled by painting that deals narrowly with harmonies or dissonances of color and design."

The more specialized show, "Selections from the Hopper Bequest,"

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which played the Whitney from September 10 to October 25, was a great deal less interesting. It consisted of a tiny sampling of the more than 2000 items—oils, watercolors, drawings, prints—which were left to the Whitney on the death of Mrs. Hopper in 1968. The early oils—those of the Paris visits (1906-1909)—are presumably valuable examples of the work of an artist who had yet to find his style, his stride, but to me, a casual Hopper enthusiast, they seem too close to the efficient commonplace. The works from the early teens show Hopper moving into the landscape where his later paintings would live, but he had yet to make it his own. There were a number of impressive watercolors, but the strength of the show lay in the drawings. The handful of nude studies, made in the Whitney Studio Club sketch class in the 1920's, are interesting primarily when one thinks of them alongside the almost metallic sensuosity of the women in the later paintings. More important, since they are direct links to finished pictures, are the drawings that Hopper made in preparation for oils; the sketches of the usherette for *New York Movie* (1939) may have been attempts to solve technical problems—for instance, to make the hand cradle the flashlight correctly—but they somehow make the figure more accessible as a human being, as a young girl, than the oil does. In it, as usual with Hopper, an impersonality cloaks the girl, reduces (or elevates) her to her role in the scene, her place in the composition. Hopper was leery of the kind of comparison I have just made, for he warned Sawyer, in the letter that seems to hang over this review like a threat, "The preliminary sketches would do little for you in explaining the making of the picture." He was probably right, finally, yet the studies for oils were the best things in the Whitney show. It is too bad that the museum could not have given us the paintings, instead of photographs of them, by way of comparison.

The BOOK is not at all what the quotation in the first paragraph promises. The advertisement from which I lifted that phrase—a full page in *Publisher's Weekly* (August 30), more than half a two-page spread in *The New York Times Book Review* (December 5)—indicates that, for Abrams, *Edward Hopper* is closer to commerce than art. "In 1968 you sold out the ANDREW WYETH," trumpets the ad, pushing a competitor's book, ". . . In 1970 the NORMAN ROCKWELL . . . *and now . . . The Big Gift Book for 1971.*" This last, in *PW*, framed in red lines, like a sampler ready for hanging. I do not mean to condescend to Andrew Wyeth—although I reached the exit from his Academy show a few years ago panting for breath (fortunately there was an Eakins hanging there to refuel me)—and certainly not to Norman Rockwell, but an attempt to peddle Hopper to the nostalgia audience suggests that the "definitive work" has somehow got hold of the wrong definition. I confess that I operate in Hopper's presence somewhere the uncertain side of definition, but I do know

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that he cannot be successfully packaged for an audience that goes for Wyeth's austere sentimentality and/or Rockwell's pathetic comedy—not at least without knocking off his hard edges.

The book (13½" by 16½") is a monster. In his brutal, funny review in *The New York Times Book Review* (November 21), Hilton Kramer, who apparently has a scale in his office, reported that it weighed nine pounds. I do know that it is not bedside reading; it is impossible to look at unless one has a sturdy desk, strong enough to hold it and long enough to spread it out. The reproductions themselves are somewhat discomforting, but that may be because I confused my eye with too many conflicting versions as I worked on the review. The watercolor, *Cottages at Wellfleet* (1933), comes across as two different pictures if you examine the reproduction in the Abrams volume alongside the one in the catalogue for the 1964 Whitney show; since I have never seen the original, I have no idea which one is more nearly accurate. Even with the paintings that I know, since I do not have total color recall, I can only assume that qualities are reaching me different from those which came to me at the Academy and at the Whitney. At one point, discussing relative color values, Lloyd Goodrich assures the reader that Hopper's pictures "do not lose their structure in black-and-white reproduction, as much modern painting does." That may be true, but as I got deeper and deeper into the Hopper volume I found that the black-and-white versions of the watercolors and the oils were of little use to me. *Manhattan Bridge,* a 1925 watercolor, is an obvious source for *Manhattan Bridge Loop,* but since the former is in black-and-white and since I have a color thing about the latter, a comparison between the two works—as the Abrams book presents them—is impossible. The volume is already prohibitively expensive and more color prints (even inferior ones: Kramer says these are "poor by any reasonable standard of current art-book publishing") would turn it into a major investment. The Hopper admirer will simply have to take comfort in the fact that there are more Hopper reproductions, however casually done, than he is likely to find in any one place in the near future.

I cannot imagine who might take comfort in Lloyd Goodrich's accompanying text. Anyone with even a passing interest in Hopper will have read it all before, mostly in Goodrich's own words. Goodrich has been writing about Hopper at least since 1927 when he contributed a few pages on the painter to the March issue of *The Arts,* a magazine he edited. He apparently hit his Hopperian stride in 1950 when he wrote the catalogue for that year's Whitney retrospective as well as the Hopper volume in The Penguin Modern Painters series. I could find neither of these in Philadelphia and, having read through several other Goodrich items, felt little desire to hunt for them beyond the city limits. I suspect, however, that *the* Goodrich piece dates from 1950. The first version of it I read was in the catalogue for the

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1964 Whitney show. A condensation of that work, often in the same words, appeared in *São Paulo 9* (1967) and again in the catalogue for the 1971 Whitney show.[3] In the latter case, new material—the facts of the bequest itself—had to be added. The Abrams volume is essentially the 1964 catalogue, decked out like a whore at a christening. In the catalogue, the text plods along from paragraph to paragraph without benefit of titles and subheads; in the Abrams volume, the material has been broken up into tiny essays, each introduced with its own title page, gold lettering on green paper, as though each snippet were a major offering of Hopper criticism. For the most part, we get the 1964 words in their original form, which may be just as well since most of Goodrich's re-writing is pointless. An example: his description of the youthful Hopper, "Thoughtful and somewhat shy, he was given to few words," becomes "Thoughtful, deliberate, and somewhat shy, he was much given to silence, but his few words carried weight." What are we to assume? That since 1964, Goodrich has encountered a nameless informant who remembers being much impressed with the wise words of the twenty-year-old Hopper? Or that occasional changes made Goodrich feel as though he were really preparing a text for the new book? I happened to read *Self-Accusation* at about the time I was considering Goodrich on Hopper, and when I reached the point in Peter Handke's *Sprechstück* in which the speakers say, "I used words thoughtlessly. I blindly attributed qualities to the objects in the world," and then pour out a string of phrases, "I called melancholy black, I called madness bright," I saw Goodrich in their place: I called an eye unerring, I called regularity monotonous, I called houses sad. Style aside, the essay is trying because it is at once repetitious and contradictory, and its critical points—even when they seem appropriate—are too often wrapped in imprecision.

In his review, Kramer calls Goodrich's text "an intellectual scandal," which of course it is when you consider that the critic, given an occasion for a major reconsideration, trotted out the same old hack work. Still, to be fair to Goodrich, he manages to make most of the standard Hopper statements; he lists the recurring images, emphasizes the use of light, comments on the horizontal structure, notes the lack of characterization in the human figures, hangs labels on the painter: "objective realist . . . strong personal emotion . . . the penetrating sense of loneliness . . . essentially a poet . . . romantic excitement." Besides, other Hopper critics—although they may be better stylists than Goodrich—move in a similar miasma of generalization. Take Kramer himself. He called his review of the 1964 Hopper show (*The New Leader*, October 12) "An American Vision," despite Hopper's earlier complaint to Kuh, "I don't see why I must have the American scene pinned on me;" in the review, Kramer makes many of the points Goodrich does

[3] EDWARD HOPPER, SELECTIONS FROM THE HOPPER BEQUEST, by *Lloyd Goodrich*. Whitney. $4.00.

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in the 1964 catalogue, although he comes down more heavily on negative nuances—"urban desolation . . . moments of boredom, loneliness and private ennui." Reviewing the new Whitney show in the *Times* (September 11, 1971), he goes over the same old ground except for one line in which he says that we once mistakenly thought of Hopper "as a happy painter." I cannot imagine when, unless he is thinking of Goodrich's reiterated belief that out of Hopper's presumably gloomy pictures comes affirmation. Much earlier, Parker Tyler, in his fascinating article "Alienation by Light" (*Magazine of Art,* December 1948), muddied his interesting comments about individual pictures with a metaphysic about light and a tendency to go for symbols. Charles Burchfield, who might have served us better, decided not to discuss the technical aspects of the paintings in his *Art News* piece on Hopper (March 1950), he chose "the spiritual content" and went for "the element of silence . . . intense loneliness . . . [moments of] enduring, universal significance." Brian O'Doherty harped on Hopper's pessimism in *Art in America* (December 1964) and William C. Seitz called his article in *São Paulo 9,* "Edward Hopper: Realist, Classicist, Existentialist." I cannot help feeling that the critics are responding to Hopper somewhat as the presumed audience for the Abrams book is expected to. You pays your money and you takes your choice: affirmation or angst.

Nor is Hopper much help. "I am interested primarily in the vast field of experience and sensation which neither literature nor a purely plastic art deals with," he wrote in the Sawyer letter; at that time, he made it clear that he did not want his pictures considered as either anecdotal paintings or exercises in technique. In the Kuh interview he attempted to differentiate between "invention" and "what comes from inside the painter," and he did so in a context in which he recalled how, years before, he had shied away from Guy Pène du Bois's word "inspiration." By the time of the Kuh interview, Hopper was almost eighty and his work had accumulated spiritual, philosophic, social adjectives like those in the paragraph above. "People find something in your work," he said, "put it into words and then it goes on forever." Obviously, he was affected (or infected) by the commentary on his work. It led him into contradiction. He told Kuh that he did not see *Nighthawks* (1942) "as particularly lonely," and a few sentences farther on said, "I was painting the loneliness of a large city." It led him to accommodation. In one lovely passage in the Kuh interview, he disowned the "loneliness and nostalgia" she asked about, only to admit that he might be a "lonely one" and that he could see nothing wrong with nostalgia in painting. He sounded like Ibsen, who is supposed to have told a critic, "Whatever you find in my plays, I put there." It led him to the put-on. At least, that is the way I see two anecdotes which the critics in question interpret differently. Brian O'Doherty, trying to trap Hopper into a usable comment on isolation, offered

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"Well, your paintings *are* sparing and empty, those people are insulated with space." Hopper answered, "Maybe they're right," and O'Doherty, telling the tale, added "meaning the critics." Meaning the people in the pictures, I suspect, and longing for a bit of insulating space between him and his questioner. Goodrich said that when he told Hopper that *High Noon* (1949) reminded him of Mondrian, the painter answered, "You kill me." For Goodrich, Hopper's response is a comment on geometric abstraction; for me, it is a comment on Goodrich. *High Noon,* in which the open gown of the blonde in the doorway is picked up by the gaping curtains in three of the windows (all those entrances and no way in) has always seemed to me almost lubricious.

Anyone who has got this far into my review must be expecting the revelation, must have assumed that I would not be laying about me so enthusiastically if I did not have the real word on Hopper. No such thing. I know that my lubricity may have no more to do with *High Noon* than Goodrich's Mondrian. I can go half way with Kramer, who praised Hopper for "the exact image that would embody an exact emotion." I can see the exact image, but I am never very sure about the emotion—my own or Hopper's. The critics quoted above, who gave me platitudes when I wanted bread, came up with their neat phrases, I think, in pure self-defense. Some of them admitted as much. Burchfield confessed of *Early Sunday Morning* (1930) that "the picture's power defies analysis," and O'Doherty, in a good statement, said, "His pictures deny meaning while they provoke it, pretend to a familiarity of recognition that they eventually frustrate."

I could scrape up my own generalizations about Hopper, of course, and, like everyone else's, they would be accurate—or possible, at least—and finally not very helpful. Let me try an exploration instead. One of the Hopper pictures that most fascinates me is *House by the Railroad,* the 1925 oil at the Museum of Modern Art, but I am not very sure about the source of my fascination. The house of the title is a mansard-roofed monstrosity, a fine example of what Hopper, in his often quoted comment on Burchfield's early work, called "Our native architecture with its hideous beauty." I have a strong affection for both the hideousness and the beauty of Victorian houses, but—the Abrams ad notwithstanding—I do not feel in the presence of a Hopper house the kind of pleasure I experience leafing through John Maass's book of photographs, *The Gingerbread Age,* or walking down the streets of Saratoga Springs.

Can the force of the picture lie in the fact that the house stands alone? Critics have assumed so, but they have taken the isolation of the house as a spiritual not a physical fact. They may have had reason, for Hopper, who usually stuck to the barest descriptive titles, slipped and called a 1923 etching *The Lonely House* (it is apparently lonely for other houses since there are children playing alongside it) and a

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1944 oil *Solitude*. Yet, I do not feel the "penetrating melancholy" that Goodrich finds in the picture; the shadows do not seem "somber" to me and I have no "sense of utter loneliness" when I look at it. Since I have trouble getting up the conventional response, I certainly cannot go on and join Parker Tyler in turning the house into "a symbol of the lone individual, isolated no matter how much surface variety the light may transiently, fickly lend him." It may be that I read sentimental sadness into phrases like "utter loneliness," that I find isolation a fact not a cause for tears. Hopper may have done the same when, according to Goodrich, he insisted, "The loneliness thing is overdone," but I hesitate to claim the artist as ally.

In one sense, of course, the isolation of the house is important. It is the center of the picture, reared up against the blue-white sky, and there is no apparent distraction from the building, the play of light and shadow on it, its splendor of windows which seems to give it a host of unseeing eyes (Oh, God, there I go, getting into the personification game). I started to write "no distraction" above, but there is the red-brown rail and embankment cutting across the bottom of the picture, and I find that my eye inevitably drops to it, travels down the slight slant of the line and out of the picture at the right. The railroads that so preoccupied Hopper in his paintings have been taken, as Seitz reminds us, quoting Sidney Tillim, as "symbols of transience," and this particular rail has had a heavier load to carry since Tyler turned it into "a barrier of time" that lets us "see the Victorian object from the standpoint of our contemporary space," as though the tracks were not also Victorian. For me, obviously, the railroad provides movement not meaning. Yet, it does not lead me outside the picture, does not make me "conscious of the spaces and elements beyond the limits of the scene itself," as Hopper told Sawyer the horizontal lines in *Manhatten Bridge Loop* should. When I reach the edge of the picture, I just fall off. The reality of a painting ends there as a play does with the final curtain. I have to scramble back into the picture as best I can, perhaps by using the red-orange chimneys as an eye-hold, but once I am there I find myself moved, as always, by the line of the house where sunshine meets shadow. I do not know why and I have no time to contemplate, for that darkness at the bottom of the painting begins to tug at me again.

Perhaps the appeal of Hopper for me is that looking at his work is a constant emotional and intellectual activity. I do know that with the best of Hopper, which means those paintings I like, I have a sense of exhilaration that belongs neither to a flaccid concept like "affirmation" nor to all that harping on isolation, loneliness, melancholy. "You are asking me to do something that is perhaps as difficult as painting is," Hopper wrote to Sawyer; "that is to explain painting with words."

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Reviews

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Youngsters, Middlesters, and Some Old Boys

THIS CHRONICLE WILL BEGIN WITH VOLUMES hot off the press, made in 1971, and move back gradually to the making of *The Waste Land* fifty years ago. That we have surely come a long way is apparent on remembering Eliot's warning about how modern poetry would have to be complex to pay its way in our complex twentieth century—and the long way we have come is to the point where young poets behave as if it didn't need to be complex at all, merely a bit unlike the kind of thing you'd say in ordinary prose, assuming you wrote ordinary prose. I breezed through these books with hardly a thought, encountering various versions of simplicity plus real talk, or plus real anger, or plus real knowledge about the U.S.A. and cosmos. Everybody knows perfectly clearly where he, she, and it are going; and since these presented versions of experience rarely if ever intersect with my own[1] I must be patient and behave as we were taught to in eighth grade book reports, my introduction to reviewing. In those days having told the class about a book you'd dutifully tried to get interested in on the Pilgrims, you ended the report by remarking confidentially—giving other readers and perhaps yourself an out—that any person interested in the Pilgrims and how they survived those lean years would want to read this book. After which you could sit down and listen to one about being exiled to Siberia—useful for budding Kremlinologists.

Anyone interested in the Space Age will want to read Burgert Roberts, who dedicates his book to Helen of Troy: "I am Man/ Whom the Space Experience/ Has lifted out of war/ Into the endless Void . . ." (from "I AM MAN: DEDICATED TO *HOMO SAPIENS*"). Anyone interested in sexual happiness through Reichian therapy will want to read Clayton Eshleman ("Through the wisdom and mercy of a woman who entered my life at that time I found out sexual happiness was the point between men and women."):

[1] SPACEWALKS, by *Burgert Roberts*. Harper & Row. $6.00. ALTARS, by *Clayton Eshleman*. Black Sparrow Press. $4.00. EECCHHOOEESS, by *N. H. Pritchard*. New York University Press. $4.50. THE HAND THAT CRADLES THE ROCK, by *Rita Mae Brown*. New York University Press. $4.50.

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> Wilhelm for you I would sit in the reverberation of the Last Supper & still keep my eyes to the gentle look in the eyes of children, for you I would make love to Caryl would keep her as the vent thru which I experience the world,
>
> ("Ode to Reich")

Can you make love to a vent?—no matter. Then there is my cousin N. H. Pritchard, who's hard to quote from, but here's a small bit of one page:

> as a hoo hooz
> as a hoo hooz
> as a hoo hooz
> as a
> as a
> as a hoo hooz

You can detect a pattern as these heroic epithets vary in the forty-four lines, I think, making up whichever unpaged page I'm quoting from. Anyone interested in N. H. Pritchard will want to *experience* his absolutely unique brand of word-magic. Not to go on overlong, but anyone interested in Feminist Lesbians would be interested in "the first book of poetry to be published in America" by one of them. I kept looking for hot bits but didn't get much beyond this: "I follow the scent of a woman/ Melon heavy/ Ripe with Joy/ Inspiring me/ To rip great holes in the night . . .", or this one from "Sappho's Reply":

> My voice rings down through thousands of years
> To coil around your body and give you strength,
> You who have wept in direct sunlight,
> Who have hungered in invisible chains,
> Tremble to the cadence of my legacy:
> An army of lovers shall not fail.

Rita Mae Brown is the daughter of Matthew Arnold and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and has successfully revived the Victorian tradition in American verse.

Then there are the mad young tough guys with zippy titles guaranteed to knock any reader's eyes out.[2] They like to tell us about themselves on the jackets; for example Terry Stokes "got married in a cemetery under a black angel in Iowa City" and titles his poems "They Die Addressing Rotary Club Luncheons":

> They die addressing Rotary Club luncheons.
> If someone were straight into their eyes
> to say, You're, ah, gonna, ah, fall
> into a plate of jello salad & cottage cheese

[2] NATURAL DISASTERS, by *Terry Stokes*. New York University Press. $4.50. DIGGING FOR INDIANS, by *Gary Gildner*. University of Pittsburgh Press. $5.25/2.95.

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will cream from your ears
& that's the way your wife will remember,
Clarence Austin Matterson, Mayor
of Yummie, Michigan.
His eyelashes were stiff
with beef gravy . . .

Or Gary Gildner describes his volume as "my bone, blood, and love book; my foible and mad book" and opens poems with "forty-six birds of either sex have enlisted/ a topless dancer to flap in their behalf;" or "We embrace & eat/ the boiled meat." No doubt you could have a good time on the town with Stokes and Gildner, but it's not clear that they have as yet developed any reservations about giving us immediately what's at the front of their minds. Shouldn't contemporary poetry be a little more complex than television? Yet these volumes were less depressing than others which shall remain unnamed.

It may seem like overkill to invoke, in this context of first or second books by young poets, the name of Geoffrey Grigson, but that most severely excellent editor and reviewer managed both to encourage good new verse (in his magazine *New Verse*) and excoriate the other kind. Concluding an introduction to an anthology of poems from his magazine he spoke out for "realism" in poetry by claiming that "I judge every poem written now, by poets under forty, by the degree to which it takes notice, for ends not purely individual, of the universe of objects and events."[3] If this sounds like no more than an outmoded dictim or naive assumption about the function of poetry from which we've been fortunately liberated, I could wish for some bondage back again, and would even hazard the guess that if more poets paid attention to "the universe of objects and events" then contemporary poetry would have a fitter audience (though few) than is provided, at least in my academic community, by me and a few other self-punishers. So I respected John Perlman's book,[4] particularly its final section—"The Nature of the Place"—for trying to set down the nature of the place: "Flaked with frost, the maple leaves/ Begin to turn. The shriveled sun rises./ A thin breeze thrashes/ Through tight, crisping branches," begins one poem; or another one about riding to New York on an early morning train sees this:

. . . A slow creek scours
this valley, Hunger,
like a prod,
coils minnows near the surface,
a lone duck dabbing

[3] Grigson's point was brought to my attention by Roy Fuller, in his recently published, extremely interesting Oxford Lectures on Poetry (*Owls and Artificers*, Andre Deutsch, 1971).

[4] KACHINA, by *John Perlman*. Ohio State University Press. $6.00.

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patiently at the water.
Then sumac,
sprawling toward the tracks,
a half-empty parking lot
still behind.

No flashy tricks in this excessively sober first volume, I wasn't exactly lifted out of my chair, but it is good not to be held up by a clown or fool who assumes that (in Pound's nice phrase) something will "go" in poetry because it's too feeble to get by in ordinary prose. And though Grigson would perhaps squirm at the use to which I am putting his phrase about the "universe of objects and events" I found that universe also taken notice of in Bill Tremblay's poem "Jack Kerouac's Funeral."[5] Tremblay, like Kerouac, went to Columbia to play football, and along the line something happened; like Kerouac he is also earnest to the point of absurdity— "I'm going to write about the spirit I know is/ there in man/ and find a way to be happy and loving/ and let the old crap of the past go at last/ and live free." Not with lines the likes of those you're not. But Kerouac's funeral is something to take notice of, and not in purely individual ways: there is Jack's mother—

tight jaw and dry eyes
deep lines and black depression trenches
in her face, the veil, anguish
like shot in the stomach but tryin' not to cry out

Ginsberg comes in with Corso
(a long navyblue coat rasputin wore)
allen stands bending at the waist talking
to mrs kerouac saying how he and gregory
will make a movie about the funeral
and she looks up and says

Do what you want
but I never want to see you again

arrggh!
and he bows (quiet guru) and goes to corso
and the sound of the goddam camera whirring

out on the street I hears the merrimack
rushing over its rocks . . .

at which points Tremblay moves back to those "1935 rocks" and the poem proceeds. If this sounds like avant-garde verse circa 1958 we could, and are doing worse.

One way to dodge looking very hard at objects and events is to

[5] CRYING IN THE CHEAP SEATS, by *Bill Tremblay*. University of Massachusetts Press. $6.00.

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become prematurely sly,[6] and though Paul Carroll in introducing Kathleen Norris as the new *Big Table* Younger Poet winner talks about her "angelism" combined with "consistent bad manners toward gentility," I was mainly struck by her slyness:

> Sporting equipment disappears overnight
> From the school gym;
> Pretty soon the whole building goes
> Poets and computer analysts are at a loss:
> The Century Teaching Apparatus,
> Consisting of books, assorted prophylactics,
> And a few students as indicators,
> Has been thrown out the window

Too bad, how sad? Or hurrah? Or I couldn't care less? Could Kathleen Norris say which if she had a mind to? Not and write The Sly Poem, punctuation absent at the crucial places, prophylactics right in there with poetry to be thrown out the window. Its title is "Poem at the End of the Sixties," and how sly to call it "Poem," to gesture at a decade as if your eyes were really on it, then to do a discreet little dance. Why should anybody take poetry seriously when it insists on behaving as if it were but a fey, wispy bit of superiority to be appreciated by the happy few? Kathleen Norris has enough wit and ease to be worth attention: let her drop all reference to angels and find something she cares to write about. No point though in talking that way to James Tate, to whom Miss Norris dedicates the final poem of her book, and whose presence is felt in it elsewhere. Tate has now got it made poetically, and turns them out by the bushels; poems called "Fuck the Astronauts"—"Eventually we must combine nightmares/ an angel smoking a cigarette on the steps/ of the last national bank, said to me . . ." or "The All-Day Sucker"—I put on my duck costume/ and bit her on the nipple. What a useless trip that was . . ." The jewel of his latest volume is a poem that repeats twenty-three times the line "then we'll get us some wine and spare ribs" and is called, naturally, "Lewis and Clark Overheard in Conversation." Tate began as a sport, and has now turned, in the title of one of his poems, into a junkie on a carousel. The title of the volume, *Hints to Pilgrims*, is perfect: no hints, no pilgrims, all a huge sly elegant piece of trifling on the assumption I guess that the original surrealists didn't do a full enough job of it.

Robert Watson's first book was praised by Randall Jarrell for its presentation of a "matter-of-fact and macabre" world, but in his third volume the macabre seems alas to have won out. The blurb pushes "personal surrealism" and I guess that's what's at work in the poem "Fat Cat":

[6] FALLING OFF, by *Kathleen Norris*. Big Table (Follet). $4.95. HINTS TO PILGRIMS, by *James Tate*. Halty Ferguson. n. p. CHRISTMAS IN LAS VEGAS, by *Robert Watson*. Atheneum. $3.95.

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Outside the window of my Cadillac
I see a village burn. The stereo
Drums out the shots, brings back
Memories of Las Vegas, sweet shad roe,
You, your breasts, nestled at the slot machine.
Here the dead are stacked about your car
Like chips; a helicopter spins, a monster
Roulette wheel. My auto bar
Holds iced martinis, liederkranz, and caviar
Outside night now turns dark as gangrene. . . .

Is it simply stupid to ask *what* car, what village, what dead? We have heard about Las Vegas before in these poems, but why? Think of how personal, yet authentically strange, Jarrell's poems were; by contrast, in this poem, Watson has no believable human voice and so the whole thing feels like a put-up job. Yet when the caviar and slot-machines are put away, the poems do sometimes touch on ordinary acts of living like getting up on Sunday morning, and there is one really fine poem called "The Radio Astronomer" from which the opening lines:

A radio astronomer in Utah lifts his ears
Over the moon and stars, sets them at empty space.
It's 3 a.m., a quiet hour. Beneath the moon it snows.

He sets his tape recorder to the ears, takes a coffee break,
Looks out the door at unintelligible random snow,
Its soft sound, drifting, each flake gorgeous as a number

In flight, gorgeous as stars and planets, their slow sounds
From long ago . . .

And on it goes with real conviction, sweeping us up into a moment of vision neither surreal nor sly.

Usually I try to treat a woman poet as if she were no different from any old man poet, but either because or in spite of the spirit of the age, I seem to have grouped together the next four volumes in sexist (or is it just by sex?) categorization.[7] Carolyn Kizer's poems often go on for too long and there is a sense of diffuseness about her new and selected volume. But also lots of intelligence, a relaxed sense of how much she can do and a less than total infatuation with her own powers. "Singing Aloud" begins with the admission that:

We all have our faults. Mine is trying to write poems.
New scenery, someone I like, anything sets me off!

[7] MIDNIGHT WAS MY CRY, by *Carolyn Kizer*. Doubleday, $5.95. THE MOTORCYCLE BETRAYAL POEMS, by *Diane Wakoski*. Simon & Schuster. $5.95. TO STAY ALIVE, by *Denise Levertov*. New Directions. $6.50. CROSSING THE WATER, by *Sylvia Plath*. Harper & Row. $5.95.

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I hear my own voice going on, like a god or an oracle,
That cello-tone, intuition. That bell-note of wisdom!

But the self-deprecation is never mawkish; she accepts the fact that when a new poem comes along "I no longer rush out to impose it on friendly colleagues," and ends up as a poet talking to the animals:

When I go to the zoo, the primates and I, in communion,
Hoot at each other, or signal with earthy gestures.
We must move further out of town, we musical birds and animals
Or they'll lock us up like the apes, and control us forever.

It is easy to like and take seriously the presence behind these lines:

The moonlight on my bed keeps me awake;
Living alone now, aware of the voices of evening,
A child weeping at nightmares, the faint love-cries of a woman,
Everything tinged by terror or nostalgia. . . .

This collection might well have included "Pro Femina," a witty and effective rallying cry.

But Carolyn Kizer may be too easy to take in; she never gets really *angry* in poems, never dips into what the excited *Sunday Times* reviewer referred to (in connection with Diane Wakoski) as "the hive of her anger." *The Motorcycle Betrayal Poems* has a fine picture on its back cover of Wakoski all set to go next to Her Yamaha, and both are in fine shape, while the book is dedicated "to all those men who betrayed me at one time or another in hope that they fall off their motorcycles and break their necks." Marvelous dedication, swell picture, but if you're that clever then will your "love songs of outrage" be as angry as the jacket promises and at least one reviewer was convinced they were? In the book's first two poems ("I Have Had to Learn to Live with my Face" and "Love Letter Postmarked Van Beethoven") you come across the angry word frequently ". . . and it is anger I want now, fury," "pride and anger and silence," "angry busloads of etched tile faces" "My own face,/ angry building I've fought to restore," "I am too angry to sleep beside you," "instead I am ashamed of my anger," or, speaking as the Yamaha,

why aren't you interested in
my beautiful little engine?
it needs a tune-up tonight, dirty with the sludge of
anger, resentment,
and the pistons all sticky . . .

but I won't go on. If you can read this book and feel *angry,* then you are either an extremely sensitive woman or an obedient motorcycle. So I decided that Diane Wakoski's hive is not mainly filled with anger, but with lots of tricks, some of them amusing ones. Later on, as the book's air thickened with betrayers named Shep and Clayton

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and Hugh and Terry and Richard, I just felt left out, without even a Yamaha to console me. If Diane Wakoski admires Robert Frost to the extent suggested in her recent *N.Y. Review of Books* piece (on David Ignatow) why not take him seriously and cease to play so much tennis with the net down, as her freest of *vers libre* permits? As Pauline Kael said of Siegfried Kracauer (apropos Wakoski's admiring Frost) "Anybody who likes Fred Astaire can't be all bad."

I should perhaps refrain from commenting on Denise Levertov's "new" volume, since I have nothing to add to what I said last year about *Relearning the Alphabet* (THE HUDSON REVIEW, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, Autumn 1970). But evidently New Directions has prevailed upon her to stretch her most recent meanderings into a new volume (pieced out with stuff from the last two) or else she could not resist letting us know everything that's been on top of her head recently. Needless to say it all boils down to Revolution, and she has been rushing about the globe bringing the news to those who've been waiting for her, drinking "*vinjak* with five Sudanese" and passing along the latest on Bobby Seale, handing over "my Panther button" to "Abubakar," recalling, in prosy inserts, marvellous times with her young friends in a revolutionay collective—"I went to see *Rock Around the Clock* with Richard and Boat and someone else from their collective" (*who?*) . . . "There was the same sense of generosity . . . a respite from the chills of fevered Amerika." That's right, she has learned how to spell it. I understand that Denise Levertov wants to pull down what her introductory words call this "obscene system" under which we live; I also understand that she thinks she is esthetically in the clear, since these poems go together to record "one person's inner/outer experience of American in the 60's." But she does not understand how self-righteousness is off-putting, even in service of the most impeccable revolutionary aims; so that when in one of these poems she addresses Judy Collins (who tried to tell a crowd that they must *love,* not be *angry*) this way—"Judy, understand:/ there comes a time when only anger/ is love"—the effect is neither esthetically nor morally palatable; or that hearing a great deal about "Tony," "Richard" etc. can be a drag, even if they are part of that sacred revolutionary collective. Has she not borne the pageant of her bleeding heart far enough? Isn't there a difference between remarks and literature? If a further volume appears before this review does, accept my apologies for being out of date.

Sylvia Plath's art, on the other hand, becomes inescapable with every additional poem that is given us. I have not yet seen her final ones (published in England as *Winter Trees*) but *Crossing the Water* is made up of "transitional poems" between *The Colossus* and *Ariel.* The title poem can be quoted entire:

> Black lake, black boat, two black, cut-paper people.
> Where do the black trees go that drink here?

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Their shadows must cover Canada.
A little light is filtering from the water flowers.
Their leaves do not wish us to hurry:
They are round and flat and full of dark advice.
Cold worlds shake from the oar.
The spirit of blackness is in us, it is in the fishes.
A snag is lifting a valedictory, pale hand;
Stars open among the lilies.
Are you not blinded by such expressionless sirens?
This is the silence of astounded souls.

I admit to being blinded by the "expressionless" song of many of these poems, in particular "Parliament Hill Fields" and by "Wuthering Heights," "Magi," "To Campers in Cloud Country." Most of the poems in *The Colossus* were well-made, finished, knowing—their knowledge built into supple syntax and authoritative speech. In *Ariel*—at least in the fireworks of "Daddy," "Lady Lazurus," "Death and Co."—the expression is immediately shocking. But the best of these "transitional poems" put the reader at great and artful distance from their illusionless speaking voice that typically defines where it is as somewhere deeper, less identifiable, less natural than anyone might assume. In the first stanza of "Parliament Hill Fields"

On this bald hill the new year hones its edge.
Faceless and pale as china
The round sky goes on minding its business.
Your absence is inconspicuous;
Nobody can tell what I lack.

a reader is unlikely to speak back to this voice in approval or shocked sympathy. Some of the new poems are grisly-humored, all of them are metaphorically ambitious and intelligent, but at their best they move beyond society, irony, tone of voice, to the realm of the something else. Reading them doesn't make you feel better about things, but makes you feel things more sharply. I should also add that these poems are just beginning to sink into my consciousness: Sylvia Plath takes time.

Moving back a generation:[8] Stephen Spender has presented us with a slim volume indeed, his first in about twenty years, and one could praise it for containing nothing of the windy pretensions of his earlier lyrics like "I think continually of those who were truly great" or "Variations on My Life." In fact there is even a satirical poem here, called "Art Student," which takes a less than noble perspective on

[8] THE GENEROUS DAYS, by *Stephen Spender*. Random House. $1.95. THE COLLECTED POEMS OF PHELPS PUTNUM, ed. *Charles Walker*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $10.00. POEMS 1968-1970, by *Robert Graves*. Doubleday. $5.95. THE POEMS OF DYLAN THOMAS, ed. by *Daniel Jones*. New Directions. $6.00. COLLECTED POEMS, by *John Betjeman*. Houghton Mifflin. $7.50.

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human life. Still you come across lines like this: "remembering/ Ten years ago, here in Geneva/ I walked with Merlau-Ponty [*sic*] by the lake./ Upon his face, I saw his intellect." Thumbing a ride with that French whiz is bad enough, but the last line is surely an example of the art of sinking in poetry, or stuffing an owl. And I wonder if anyone but me is beginning to be bored with hearing about how icy and surgical W. H. Auden was back in those rich Oggsford days?

> You—the young bow-tied albino undergraduate
> With rooms on Peck Quad (blinds drawn down at midday
> To shut the sun out)—read your poems aloud
> In so clinical a voice. I thought
> You held each word gleaming on forceps
> Up to your lamp. Images seemed segments
> On slides under the iciest of microscopes
> Which showed white edges round dark stains
> Of the West collapsing to a farce:

and we go on to hear about how Auden's "nicotine-stained fingers" fished out unpoetic things like "carburettors, sparking plugs" (note quaint English terminology) and "rigged such junk into strange new machines." Read aloud, in a clipped English voice, this can really be offensive, but only of course if you still have difficulty accepting Auden as the satirist, Spender as the lyric poet (in Leavis old terms) of a 1930's poetical renascence.

As for *The Collected Poems of H. Phelps Putnam,* a foreword by Edmund Wilson reveals the interesting fact that Putnam once displayed his bare back to Wilson, and Wilson thought he had been whipped, "not knowing then that women, in their passion, sometimes thus ripped their lovers' backs." By comparison, the poems themselves are callow and feeble indeed, even though specially pleaded for by Matthiessen's essay (included here, as well as tributes by Putnam's sister and by the editor) whose comparisons with Yeats and Eliot do not convince. Maybe you have to have certain connections to appreciate this book, pride of family, pride of Yale; when it comes to Art I follow Pooh Bah's insistence in the *Mikado* that "Family pride must be denied/and set aside/and mortified."

Certainly the most prideful poet writing in the world today is Robert Graves, who at age 75 has published his poems from over the last three years, designed to succeed *Poems 1965-1968* and the *Collected Poems* of 1965. The first half of this four-sectioned book consists of songs and love poems that seem to bear the closest of relationships to Graves's recent experience. This fidelity has the result of leaving most of them more open, less wittily incised and finished, even sometimes like transcriptions of an event that in memory still takes away the poet's breadth. I found these poems stranger, of more limited interest, and below the very high mark that the best of collected Graves has set. His more social, advice-giving earlier

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mode does get a workout in the third section of the new collection, with some highly satisfactory results—as in "The Risk":

> Though there are always doctors who advise
> Fools on the care of their own foolish bodies,
> And surgeons ready to rush up and set
> Well-fractured arms or thighs, never forget
> That you are your own body and alone
> Can give it a true medical opinion
> Drawn not from catalogued analogies
> But from a sense of where your danger lies,
> And how it obstinately defies the danger.
>
> Your body, though yourself, can play the stranger
> As when it falls in love, presuming on
> Another's truth and perfect comprehension,
> And fails to ask you: dare it run the risk
> Of a mild cardiac lesion or slipped disk?

You don't even have to respect The White Goddess to admire this poem. There is also an educative sermon on fame ("Troublesome Fame") which begins with the perils of being born famous,

> To be born famous, as your father's son
> Is a fate troublesome enough, unless
> Like Philip's Alexander of Macedon
> You can out-do him by superb excess
> Of greed and profligacy and wantonness.

then moves through the difficulties and liabilities of becoming famous at various stages on life's way, then concludes by choosing the last stage:

> But Fame attendant on extreme old age
> Falls best. What envious youth cares to compete
> With a lean sage hauled painfully upstage,
> Bowing, gasping, shuffling his frozen feet—
> A ribboned hearse parked plainly down the street?

A diction that accommodates words like "profligacy" or "cardiac lesion"; the creation of puzzles and object lessons you couldn't have predicted the outcome of; masterly rhyming throughout; these are three virtues for which Graves should be read more than he is (students in my course are usually surprised and interested to encounter him) and why much of his work in this volume is first-rate.

Is it possible really to like both Graves and Dylan Thomas? If Graves were asked the question he'd reply with a disdainful hoot (see his comments on Thomas in "These Be Your Gods, Oh Israel"), and you need more catholic taste than mine to take them with equal seriousness. *The Poems of Dylan Thomas* adds about a hundred

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poems to the old *Collected Poems* which I purchased in 1953 with such excited sense of myself as a real poetry reader. I had already attempted to play Thomas' Caedmon recording of "A Child's Christmas in Wales" at Pritchard's Christmas in Johnson City, N.Y., with less than splendid results. It was my father who spoiled things, after I had proudly played him the recording, by ungraciously insisting on either the first or second time through that I Turn The Goddamned Thing Down!—as if it were Stan Kenton or Dizzy Gillespie. And as Thomas would go on about "the foxes"—in "Fern Hill" or "In the White Giant's Thigh"—my father would mutter in cruel parody "Ah, the foxes, the foxes . . ." I decided he was a Philistine, and he was too, but returning to Thomas over the years since then, and now on this occasion, I can't help feeling my father was on to something. Turn the damned thing down! Of course at certain times Thomas adjusted the volume himself: "In My Craft or Sullen Art," "The Conversation of Prayer," the beginning of "A Winter's Tale," seem to me at least arguably the best poems, and none of them shouts. And though most of the additional poems published here shade undistinguishably into each other, one takes notice of how cleverly intelligent Thomas could be at less than bardic heights. "A Letter to My Aunt Discussing the Correct Approach to Modern Poetry" sets out to help the aunt elevate her "middle brow" into a love of modernist poetry ("Never be lucid, never state/ If you would be regarded great,/ The simplest thought or sentiment . . . "Remember this: each rose is wormy,/ And every lovely woman's germy . . .") and ends with this final advice:

> Take courage aunt, and send your stuff
> To Geoffrey Grigson with my luff,
> And may I yet live to admire
> How well your poems light the fire.

But remember that Grigson published Thomas in *New Verse,* then later on when *Deaths and Entrances* appeared (1946) chastised him for some of the things he, Thomas, had satirized modernist poets for: Grigson spoke of "word-tumbling without either gravity of point, or point of fun" and the title of his essay is "How Much Me Now Your Acrobats Amaze" (*The Harp of Aeolus,* 1948). With regret I have come to accept this view of most of Dylan Thomas' poems, but readers should check out my judgment by working through the new collection.

They had better also check me out on John Betjeman, whom I had cozily assumed was the poet only for someone who didn't like the real twentieth century article. Instead, and I can't say how much Philip Larkin's introduction to this new and enlarged edition influenced me, I ended up being charmed and moved by Betjeman poems I didn't know existed. The main image which needed correction was of Betjeman as wicked satirist who calls up the ghastly facts of middle-

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class English life and invites us to find them likewise appalling. But in fact the poems often look like "Devonshire Street W. 1."

> The heavy mahogany door with its wrought-iron screen
> Shuts. And the sound is rich, sympathetic, discreet.
> The sun still shines on this eighteenth-century scene
> With Edwardian faience adornments—Devonshire Street.
>
> No Hope. And the X-ray photographs under his arm
> Confirm the message. His wife stands timidly by.
> The opposite brick-built house looks lofty and calm
> Its chimneys steady against a mackerel sky.
>
> No hope. And the iron nob of this palisade
> So cold to the touch, is luckier now than he
> "Oh merciless, hurrying Londoners! Why was I made
> For the long and the painful deathbed coming to me?"
>
> She puts her fingers in his as, loving and silly,
> At long-past Kensington dances she used to do
> "It's cheaper to take the tube to Piccadilly
> And then we can catch a nineteen or a twenty-two."

Know any other modern poems on this subject? We've heard all about Betjeman and buildings, but isn't the look and feel of our earthly furniture beautifully and pointedly rendered here in door, house and iron nob? Reading through these poems, and as I've been doing, reading concurrently through Hardy's, makes you see the justice of Larkin invoking the earlier poet in connection with the later one—as one would also want to invoke Larkin himself. Of course there are also distinct Betjeman pleasures—as in "Station Syren": "She sat with a Warwick Deeping./ Her legs curl'd round in a ring,/ Like a beautiful panther sleeping,/ Yet always ready to spring."—and it goes on. If somebody says, *how* can you dismiss Dylan Thomas and praise this upstart inferior Betjeman, I invite a comparison of the following poem with the famous "Fern Hill":

> How did the Devil come? When first attack?
> These Norfolk lanes recall lost innocence,
> The years fall off and find me walking back
> Dragging a stick along the wooden fence
> Down this same path, where, forty years ago,
> My father strolled behind me, calm and slow.
>
> I used to fill my hand with sorrel seeds
> And shower him with them from the tops of stiles,
> I used to butt my head into his tweeds
> To make him hurry down those languorous miles
> Of ash and alder-shaded lanes, till here
> Our moorings and the masthead would appear.

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There after supper lit by lantern light
  Warm in the cabin I could lie secure
And hear against the polished sides at night
  The lap lap lapping of the weedy Bure,
A whispering and watery Norfolk sound
Telling of all the moonlit reeds around.

How did the Devil come? When first attack?
  The church is just the same, though now I know
Fowler of Louth restored it. Time, bring back
  The rapturous ignorance of long ago,
The peace, before the dreadful daylight starts,
Of unkept promises and broken hearts.

It makes some difference in that final stanza to have the business about Fowler of Louth (who's that?) as an indication of what the voice knows now and how far the church is from being "the same" one, even when its sameness is insisted upon. Larkin's claim for this poetry is really quite large: "He offers us . . . something we cannot find in any other writer—a gaiety, a sense of the ridiculous, an affection for human beings and how and where they live, a vivid and vivacious portrait of mid-twentieth-century English social life." I would not now be easily convinced that what Larkin sees is only what he wishes to see.

Everything about the publication of what used to be referred to as the *ur-Waste Land* is wholly admirable excepting the price, which hurts a bit, especially compared to Faber's release of it in England for five pounds.[9] It is surely the literary event of the fall, and has been widely, seriously and extremely well reviewed by a number of British and American critics. A partial exception was the *TLS* reviewer, who had interesting things to say about the poem, but wanted some sort of "information" about what was really wrong with Eliot's first marriage, which information he assumes Valerie Eliot isn't ready to supply and the lack of which supposedly allows Eliot's enemies to slander his reputation—"What is there to hide? Whatever it is, it cannot be worse than what is commonly alleged in whispers." Evidently words like "neurasthenia" or "nervous breakdown" are no longer able to satisfy our passion for the Real Facts. At any rate, in relation to such "facts," Robert Sencourt's grotesque memoir[10] is hardly worth dwelling on except to point out how he has—wittingly or not who could say—made himself out as a deep knower of what the *TLS* reviewer called Eliot's "predicament." Here is Sencourt on Bertrand Russell and the Eliots in 1916: Russell was "particularly

[9] T. S. ELIOT: THE WASTE LAND. A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound, edited by *Valerie Eliot*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $22.50.

[10] T. S. ELIOT: A MEMOIR, by *Robert Sencourt*. Dodd, Mead and Co. $8.95.

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taken with the vivacious and attractive Vivienne" and at one point the Eliots were temporarily living with him. To fill us in on Russell's character, Sencourt quotes the big bit about "I have sought love . . ." from the introduction to the *Autobiography;* then writes an extraordinary paragraph which begins with the sentence "One afternoon in early November Tom, enjoying a half-holiday from Wycombe Grammar School, came back to the flat around 3:30."[11] At this point a footnote (!) makes us turn to the back, but it's only an *ibid.,* pointing us to Russell's *Autobiography.* Then instead of telling us what was happening or had happened at the flat at 3:30 when "Tom" got there, we get a quote from a Russell letter to Ottoline Morrell about how close he feels to both Eliots. Then Sencourt tells us that "Vivienne" likes to tease those she loved, including her "adored husband." Then how Russell was cruel (like in Dostoievski) but "As a man with considerable experience with women, Russell was in a position to understand her better even than her husband could. Tom, by comparison, was a simple American who had lived with healthy, normal people." You might think, with all this, that Sencourt was there, but in fact he didn't meet Eliot till eleven years later. But as can perhaps be seen his memoir should prove titillating to those who want to talk about Predicaments and explain them sagely.

But let us hastily and gladly drop Sencourt, and Bertrand Russell too, by turning in happy contrast to the poem and *il miglior Fabbro.* Pound's marginal remarks are so incisive and amusing that they almost obscure the fact that Eliot had to go on from them and get the poem right, as in the case of twelve lines from "The Fire Sermon" which move the young man carbuncular out of the typist's flat, then notch her epitaph:

> —Bestows one final patronising kiss,
> And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit;
> And at the corner where the stable is,
> Delays only to urinate, and spit.

Pound's comment on the last two lines is "probably over the mark," as they surely now seem, so Eliot got rid of them and stuck an ellipsis after "unlit"—and the clerk gropes his way into silence. Then:

> She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
> Hardly aware of her departed lover;
> Across her brain one half-formed thought may pass;
> "Well now that's done, and I am glad it's over."

Pound crossed out "may" in the third line and challenged the poet with "make up yr mind/ you Tiresias if you know know damn well or

[11] Hugh Kenner has already drawn attention to this sentence in his Sunday *Times* review, but I can't resist further comment on the whole paragraph.

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else you don't." (He had written simply "Echt" next to the lines about Tiresias and Thebes just preceding.) With:

> When lovely woman stoops to folly and
> She moves about her room again, alone,
> She smoothes her hair with automatic hand,
> And puts a record on the gramophone

Pound substituted "Then" for "She" in line two, but it was Eliot who saw the metrical snag and eventually came up with the superb "Paces." The fact is, as Frank Kermode has pointed out, that the poem as we have known it for years seems so inevitable we tend to hail any earlier version as necessarily imperfect, a step on the road to the way it all was to work out. But it should be said that both Pound and Eliot come off as flexible, imaginative, ingenious gents (remember and scorn Harold Bloom's reference to them as "the Cowley and Cleveland of our age") with formidable theatrical flares that were a match for each other. At about the same time as he was composing *The Waste Land* Eliot was also trying to get Ben Jonson an audience by evoking the "titanic show" his plays provided. It can now be seen how Eliot's own show was made a good deal more titanic by Pound's collaborative labors, and a good deal less like the shows of earlier creators, in particular of Alexander Pope.

Valerie Eliot's introduction, a model of compressed information, lays out much pertinently related material, and the tone and discrimination of her treatment is of fine intelligence throughout. What she quotes from Eliot's letters, written around the time of the poem, makes us eager for the generous selection of them we hope is in the offing. Already by November of 1922 Eliot had moved on: "As for *The Waste Land,* that is a thing of the past so far as I am concerned and I am now feeling toward a new form and style." Last year's words already belonged to last year's language. And despite the fascination of this splendid edition *The Waste Land* remains as strange a poem as ever it did, as resistant to any keys that would unlock it, pluck out its mystery. Instead of worrying about whether Eliot's stock is going up or down at the moment, or whether *Four Quartets* is an advance or decline in his art over *The Waste Land,* or whether there isn't some explanatory scheme by which we can understand and sympathize with a man's life experience of fifty years ago, I propose as a salute to the poem R. P. Blackmur's confession with regard to the lines from "What the Thunder Said" that begin "a woman drew her long black hair out tight" and end with "voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells." Blackmur was willing to let the exegetes talk about Chapel Perilous and John the Baptist—"But for myself, I muse and merge and ache and find myself feeling with the very senses of my thought greetings and cries from all the senses there are." It's an old time response; it's good enough for me.

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RICHMOND LATTIMORE

The Purity of Poetry

HERE IN ONE VOLUME[1] are all of Valéry's poems which had already been collected, plus a selection of early poems, mostly published in periodicals but not previously in any volume. This is, as I understand, the fullest available publication, though still not a complete publication, of Valéry's poems in book form. The poems in French have the translations, by David Paul, on facing pages. The volume also contains Valéry's "Recollection" on poetry and selections from the Notebooks, translated, without the French, by James Lawler. Finally, Lawler has added notes on the poems, sometimes with variant versions, which he has translated.

This, then, is only one volume in a complete fifteen-volume Bollingen edition of Valéry (edited by Jackson Mathews), most of the others being already in print. But this volume all by itself offers a comprehensive view of the life in letters of one of the major poets, indisputably, in this century. The very attitudes in his career are strange and striking enough. Valéry's juvenilia form a small corpus of extraordinary quality, which any mature greatness should be proud to acknowledge. Consider, for instance, "La Fileuse," a silky dense consummate sonnet by a poet scarcely, if at all, out of his teens. These early poems, considerably reworked, had appeared in various small periodicals; but they were collected for a volume only through the insistence and enthusiasm of Valéry's admiring friends. This was the *Album des vers anciens,* (1920) of which its author wrote: "*La Conque, Le Centaure, La Syrînx, L'Ermitage, La Plume* were once kind enough to accept these ventures, which led their author quite promptly to a lasting dissociation from poetry." Valéry did indeed abandon writing poetry altogether for nearly twenty years, and when he returned, it was almost as a *poète malgré lui.* But the process of editing early poems led to the composition of *La Jeune Parque,* which was originally intended as a forty-line postscript to the collection, but which grew to more than five hundred lines, took him four years to write, and gave him an international reputation. Furthermore, the seminal task of composition generated more and more poems, which, he tells us, gave him a way of cutting himself off from the world—the world, that is, of affairs and business. There followed *Charmes,* in several editions.

[1] THE COLLECTED WORKS OF PAUL VALERY, edited by *Jackson Mathews.* Bollingen Series XLV. Volume I. Princeton University Press. *Poems,* tr. by David Paul; *On Poets and Poetry,* selected and tr. from the Notebooks by James R. Lawler. $10.00.

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Valéry kept extensive notebooks, in which he jotted down his thoughts as they came to his mind, without consideration for any reader (not that they were secret); without, that is, any desire to compose a system and instruct or indoctrinate accordingly. These notes are not only characteristic of a man but illuminating for the study of his poetry (I am not sure that Valéry would have wanted his poems to be *studied,* exactly, but that situation can scarcely be helped). The notes also, being what they are, necessarily seem at times to be contradictory. The very description of the poem-writing as a way of cutting oneself off from the world is somewhat mysterious. It is no simple matter of ivory towers, nor does it seem to have betokened the withdrawal of an active man from an active life.

Rather, it has to do with Valéry's concept of poetry itself, and of his poetry, and of the life of the mind. He has no contempt for the intellect; but he considers that it has little to do with the capacity of a poet, or with poetry. In connection with "Le Cimetière Marin" he actually apologizes for bringing in Zeno-with-the-arrow and Achilles-and-the-tortoise; it is the flavor of philosophy he is using, he tells us, not philosophy itself (his respect for the intellect does not, in fact, altogether save philosophers from his contempt). But, thus, Valéry sometimes implies, sometimes avows, a kind of contempt for poetry itself. Or, as he puts it in another place, his aim is not literary; or he is interested only in expression; or, again, the subject matter of poetry is utterly unimportant. The remarks on cutting himself off from the world certainly rule out any preoccupation with relevance, one of today's demons. What then is important? The absolute necessity for technique, mastery of medium, must have been so obvious to him that, so far as I can find, it never occurred to him that it needed to be stated or implied. Indirectly, nevertheless, he does state it. He calls his early poems exercises, but then adds that he esteems nothing more than he esteems gymnastics; which certainly demand the most absolute control of medium and materials. Yet this is, perhaps, an extreme statement.

The question might be approached in this way. During his self-imposed exile from poetic composition, Valéry conceived a creature called M. Teste, a contemplative uncreative inactive person for whom the brain is all. Rather than being a proper character of fiction (we shall come presently to what Valéry thinks of fiction), M. Teste seems to represent an ideal. Just as in the poems themselves the word *"pur"* appears again and again, so there seems to be a concept always at the edges of the mind, of pure idea, the uncreated stuff of creation, Valéry seems to be preoccupied with the idea of the pure poem. But I do not think he considered that he ever came close to definition; he merely offers, from time to time, some aphorisms which partly explain what he means. Aphorisms about poetry are never, as in Gautier, to be found in a poem by Valéry, but they abound in his prose. But

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it would be the work of a lifetime, he says, to arrive at a precise idea of poetry; and, he adds, not worth doing. And yet he did write those superb poems.

For "La Jeune Parque," Valéry listed those writers and composers who had been his "familiar spirits" during the poem's composition: Vergil, Racine, Chénier, Baudelaire, Beethoven, Wagner, Euripides, Petrarch, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Hugo, Claudel (a man his own age), and Gluck. Valéry offered no explanation; we can only speculate. We get poets and musicians, no novelists. As for Vergil, it is interesting that Valéry translated, by request, the *Bucolics (Eclogues),* though he confessed that he could be excited neither by pastoral poetry nor by the rustic world which is supposed to provide its background (*"je confesse que les thèmes bucoliques n'excitent pas furieusement mon courage"*). Euripides is, to me, the most surprising. These voices did not have to resemble those they spoke to, or so it seems. Euripides is sentimental, sententious, argumentative, political. Such poetry Valéry disowns in theory as in practice. Poetry for Valéry (and Valéry's poetry) does not make statements. He is impatient with those who insist that poets are saying something. *A fortiori,* he does not tell stories; in literature, "the most vulgar genre is narrative, fiction." His aim is "to pass from an *impure* form mixed with all the means of the mind to a *pure* form, that is, merely verbal and organized, reduced to a system of acts or arranged contrasts."

While this passion for purity, this horror of vulgarity, may be characteristically French (think of the ideal of Racine as against Shakespeare), Valéry seems to be, with Mallarmé, an extreme proponent. But he uses "pure," as Theodora Bosanquet has put it, as a chemist would. Certainly, there is no question of moralizing, no puritanical austerity. There is indeed a strong sensuous strain in the poems, and physical beauty predominates. We have all those girls, those sleeping beauties, clothed or not, reminiscent of Leconte de Lisle's Leilah or the odalisques so beloved of French painters, and we have bathing beauties as well, and Helen and Venus and Semiramis. In "Aurore," the poet sees his own ideas as a group of beauties scattered prone on the grass, wakening luxuriously to his presence. Such pure embodiments may be invaded and seized by the storms of passion and creation, the ferment and agony of thought, sometimes symbolized by a biting snake, as in "La Jeune Parque"; such are also the Pythia in "La Pythie," and lovely stupid Eve in "Ébauche d'un Serpent." Some complete poems are made from the contemplation of quiet *things,* trees, or columns, which seem as live as the trees: "Au Platane," "Palme," "Cantique des Colonnes." Most of Valéry's modes and talents are combined in the master poem, "Le Cimetière Marin." Here we have roof with pigeons, sea with sailboats, graveyard grass with tombstones, the thoughts of the poet, pasturing sheep, all marvellously combined, varied, and turned into each other.

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Plainly, poems like this, with their elusive content, individual style, and meticulous form, must offer the usual difficulties to the translator, and perhaps more. Here we are given the French with translation on facing pages. This method is approved by all; one may still be allowed to ask, for whom is it intended? To a classicist, the obvious traditional exemplar is the Loeb Series (or analogous French Budé Series), with Greek or Latin on one side, and translation, mostly and preferably quite literal, on the other. The reader with no Greek or Latin would as soon do without the original text, but the facing series may be quite useful to the classical scholar, even an advanced one, for he can rapidly read the English for content, to follow historical or epic narrative, dramatic sequence, philosophical thought, or go hunting down aphorisms, able at all times to refer directly to the conveniently adjacent original. But who would ever read the poetry of Valéry in this fashion or for such purposes when for it he has forsworn precisely such types of content and, one might almost say, all content so far as possible? Plainly, the translation is to serve as a dignified pony for the reader who has some French but is not altogether proficient; or else, each translation is meant to be both a translation and a new work of art by the translator-poet, with rights and standards of its own, by which to be judged.

David Paul has made his own statements about translation, but I am not sure that I can put them all together. He says that a translation must attempt re-creation, and that a ballade of Villon or a sonnet of Baudelaire will be lost in a literal prose crib; but he has also said that, except in mostly eschewing the use of rhyme, his versions do not claim to be "free." They go line by line with the original. Valéry uses the classical rhymed Alexandrine couplet, but he also indulges in a greater variety of rhymed forms than do most of his predecessors and contemporaries. Paul seems mostly to be making little attempt to follow the metre of his originals.

Translators are doomed to compromise. What we expect here is, after all, the superior pony, which will help the semi-literate reader of French in his reading of Valéry, a reader who may either read the English first and, thus fortified, go to the French, or start with the French and disentangle himself with the help of the English. And with rhyme and metre sacrificed, it is reasonable for us to look for a high degree of fidelity.

This, mostly, we get, but a little carping will show types of what are, I think, the shortcomings we must put up with. In "Orphée," *"Le feu, des cirques purs descend"* is "Fire falls from the pure circuses." Slapstick. Must not these be mountain cirques? In "Profusion du Soir," *"Tire le noir navire épuisé de vapeur"* is "Pulls at the black ship exhausted of its vapor." Why "pulls *at*"? And surely the ship has lost its steam? In "La Jeune Parque," *"Le poison, mon poison, m'éclaire et se connaît:/Il colore une vierge à soi-même enlacée"* is

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"That poison of mine enlightens me, knows its skill./ It pictures a virgin wound upon herself." Does not the poison recognize itself, is not the virgin in her own embrace? At all events, "wound" right after "poison" is unhappy. In "Aurore," those ideas in the form of girls, asked whether they have been playing the courtesan out of boredom, reply that they are "toujours sages"; *not* "wise as always," which Paul gives us. Surely, "sage" is used as for children, and means they have been good girls who behave themselves. Sometimes, without actual mistranslation, we have infelicities. The title, "La Suave Agonie," is "Soothing Death Pangs." Better to have been ploddingly literal. In "Ébauche d'un Serpent" the snake greets Adam and Eve with "Hi there" (for *"Hola"*). In "Ode Secrète," *"Ce grand corps qui fit tant de choses"* is "The great body of many a feat." One may multiply instances, but one must remember too that this poet is sometimes almost untranslatable. He can write ("La Jeune Fille"):

Aux flammes se mêle la souple
Jeune fille vive qui sait
Encore mal garder une couple
De colombes dans son corset.

What does a translator do with that?

But let me return briefly to the question of the whole form. Paul states: "Six-stress rhyming couplets, at any dramatic or narrative length, remain (until proved otherwise) impossible in English." I do not see why the English line, rhyming couplets or no, should not have the same number of syllables as the French; but in the past, the translating poets have preferred, what Paul specifically rejects, the five-beat English line, with rhyme. I think of, among others, Andrew Lang, Arthur Symons, Ludwig Lewisohn, Jethro Bithell, and particularly Aldous Huxley, whose "Après-midi d'un Faune" is a masterpiece in this medium. It is a medium from which more recent translators have turned away to some extent, as part, I suppose, of the general restlessness over traditional forms. Rhyme does of course have its tyrannies and costs. Some words must go, intruders must appear. Perhaps the best way to end this review is to give, without further comment, the first three stanzas of "Le Cimetière Marin" (in *ten*-syllable lines), followed first by Paul's translation, and then in the rhymed version of Barbara Gibbs:[2]

Ce toit tranquille, où marchent des colombes,
Entre les pins palpite, entre les tombes;
Midi le juste y compose de feux
La mer, la mer, toujours recommencée!
Ô récompense après une pensée
Qu'un long regard sur le calme des dieux!

[2] *An Anthology of French Poetry from Nerval to Valéry*, edited by Angel Flores (Doubleday Anchor. 1958).

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Quel pur travail de fins éclairs consume
Maint diamant d'imperceptible écume,
Et quelle paix semble se concevoir!
Quand sur l'abîme un soleil se repose,
Ouvrages purs d'une éternelle cause,
Le Temps scintille et le Songe est Savoir.

Stable trésor, temple simple à Minerve,
Masse de calme, et visible réserve,
Eau sourcilleuse, Oeil qui gardes en toi
Tant de sommeil sous un voile de flamme,
Ô mon silence! . . . Édifice dans l'âme,
Mais comble d'or aux mille tuiles, Toit!

*

Quiet that roof, where the doves are walking,
Quivers between the pines, between the tombs;
Justicer Noon out there compounds with fires
The sea, the sea perpetually renewed!
Ah what a recompense, after a thought,
A prolonged gazing on the calm of gods!

What lucid toil of pure lightings consumes
Many a diamond of imperceptible foams,
And what a stillness seems to beget itself.
For while a sun hangs over the abyss,
Pure workings of an eternal cause,
Time scintillates, and the Dream is knowledge.

Store of sameness, temple sheer to Minerva,
Massively tranquil, visibly contained,
Supercilious deep, Eye keeping your secret
Of all that slumber in a veil of flame,
My own silence! . . . The soul's edifice . . .
But towering gold, Roof of a thousand tiles!

*

This tranquil roof, with walking pigeons, looms
Trembling between the pines, among the tombs;
Precise midday the sea from fire composes—
The sea, the sea, forever rebegun!
What recompense after a thought is one
Look on the calm of gods the sea disposes!

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Pure energies of lightning-flash consume
What diamond of evanescent spume!
And how is peace conceived in this pure air!
When the sun rests at noon above the abyss,
Pure work of an eternal cause is this,
And dream is knowledge, here in trembling air.

Temple unto Athena, quiet curve,
Ponderous calm and visible reserve,
Enchanting water, sleeping eye, aloof
Beneath a flaming veil, enduring bowl,
O silence! Like a tower within the soul,
But summit of a thousand gold tiles, Roof!

Notes on Contributors

OCTAVIO PAZ is Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard University this year. "Return" ("Vuelta") was read by him at the Universitas Project Symposium at The Museum of Modern Art in January.

JAMES MERRILL's newest volume of poetry, *Braving the Elements,* will be published by Atheneum in early fall.

PHILIP HOBSBAUM* is a British poet, author of *The Place's Fault* (1964); *In Retreat* (1966); *Coming Out Fighting* (1969). The latter two were published here by Dufour Editions. He is also the author of *Theory of Criticism* (University of Indiana Press, 1970).

RICHARD PEVEAR lives in York Harbor, Maine and has taught briefly at the University of New Hampshire.

HILDA MORLEY* lives in New York City and is most recently teaching at Rutgers University. A book of poems called *The Bird of the Long Neck* is due to be published by Jargon in the very near future.

ROGER HOBDELL is an English poet living in London. The first part of "Frontiers of Summer" appeared in Volume XXIII, No. 4 (Winter 1970-71) of THE HUDSON REVIEW.

The English poet and critic JOHN HOLLOWAY will be holding a visiting Chair at the Johns Hopkins' University this spring.

VERNON YOUNG's collection of essays, *On Film,* will be published by Quadrangle this fall.

RICHMOND LATTIMORE has published translations from Ronsard, Du Bellay, Nerval, and Leconte de Lisle in THE HUDSON REVIEW and elsewhere. A collected volume of his poetry will be brought out by Scribner's later this year.

PATRICIA MEYER SPACKS is Professor of English at Wellesley College. Her latest book is *An Argument of Images* (Harvard University Press).

BERNARD BERGONZI is Professor of English at the University of Warwick. He is the author of *The Situation of the Novel* and *T. S. Eliot.*

Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

Fiction and Truth[1]

POETS LIE, SAID PLATO; but novelists don't always tell the truth either. E. M. Forster made his reputation from novels in which respectable Englishmen and Englishwomen try to work out their fates under circumstances that wouldn't have seemed outlandish to Trollope or Jane Austen. Meanwhile, between his two best known novels, in 1913-14 ("at the height of his powers," according to the blurb), he wrote *Maurice*. Now at last *Maurice* is in print, posthumously, with evidence of Forster's primary and lifelong commitment to circumstances that neither *Howards End* nor *A Passage to India* found room for, that indeed at the time weren't even mentionable in private conversation except (as Forster indicates in his "Terminal Note," dated 1960) among "carefully picked" friends:

> "Alec, wake up."
> An arm twitched.
> "Time we talked plans."
> He snuggled closer, more awake than he pretended, warm, sinewy, happy. Happiness overwhelmed Maurice too. He moved, felt the answering grip, and forgot what he wanted to say. Light drifted in upon them from the outside world where it was still raining. A strange hotel, a casual refuge protected them from their enemies a little longer.
> "Time to get up, boy. It's morning."
> Git up then."
> "How can I the way you hold me!"
> "Aren't yer a fidget, I'll learn you to fidget." He wasn't deferential any more. The British Museum had cured that. This was 'oliday, London with Maurice, all troubles over, and he wanted to drowse and waste time, and tease and make love.

The British Museum didn't brace up Alec with a series of lectures

1 MAURICE, by *E. M. Forster*. Norton. $6.95. ALBERGO EMPEDOCLE AND OTHER WRITINGS, by *E. M. Forster*. Liveright. $7.95. A DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME: THIRD MOVEMENT (THE VALLEY OF BONES, THE SOLDIER'S ART, THE MILITARY PHILOSOPHERS), by *Anthony Powell*. Little, Brown. $8.95. BOOKS DO FURNISH A ROOM, by *Anthony Powell*. Little, Brown. $5.95. WITH SHUDDERING FALL, by *Joyce Carol Oates*. Crest. $0.95 A GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS, by *Joyce Carol Oates*. Crest. $0.95. EXPENSIVE PEOPLE, by *Joyce Carol Oates*. Crest. $0.95. THEM, by *Joyce Carol Oates*. Crest. $1.25. WONDERLAND, by *Joyce Carol Oates*. Vanguard. $7.95. OUR GANG, by *Philip Roth*. Random House. $5.95. RABBIT REDUX, by *John Updike*. Knopf. $7.95. TORREGRECA, by *Ann Cornelisen*. Atlantic-Little, Brown. $8.50. VENDETTA OF SILENCE, by *Ann Cornelisen*. Atlantic-Little, Brown. $6.95. AKENFIELD, by *Ronald Blythe*. Delta. $2.45.

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on equality and sex hygiene, it was merely the locale in the previous chapter where Maurice Hall talked him out of blackmail ("Mr Hall—you reckernize it wouldn't very well suit you if certain things came out, I suppose") and over to true love: Forster, however, is scrutinizing those sinewy limbs, not problems of denotation. And if you've begun to suspect that, a dozen years before *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* Forster had already hit on the theme of sex as the solvent of English class distinctions, you'll be delighted by the information that Alec too is a gamekeeper! Lady or lord, soft or sinewy, it's all in the same bag.

The trouble with homosexuals is that they're snobs: "The love that Socrates bore Phaedo now lay within his reach, love passionate but temperate, such as only finer natures can understand . . .";

> "I'm a bit of an outlaw, I grant, but it serves these people right. As long as they talk of the unspeakable vice of the Greeks they can't expect fair play. It served my mother right when I slipped up to kiss you before dinner. She would have no mercy if she knew, she wouldn't attempt, wouldn't want to attempt to understand that I feel to you as Pippa to her fiancé, only far more nobly, far more deeply, body and soul, no starved medievalism of course, only a—a particular harmony of body and soul that I don't think women have even guessed. But you know."

All the Platonizing doesn't protect Forster's metaphors against frequent oral and colonic irrigations: "Clive knew that ecstasy cannot last, but can carve a channel for something lasting, and he contrived a relation that proved permanent. If Maurice made love it was Clive who preserved it, and caused its rivers to water the garden. He could not bear that one drop should be wasted. . . ."

Maurice, bad as it is, nevertheless is Forster's only truthful book, full of nerves, hysteria, infatuations, bitterness ("England has always been disinclined to accept human nature"), and facts about the England of 1914 that help explain Maurice's choice of the unspeakable vice: "When he arrived in her room after marriage, she did not know what he wanted. Despite an elaborate education, no one had told her about sex. . . . So much could never be mentioned. He never saw her naked, nor she him. . . ." The "great novels" are mirages. *A Passage to India* has some travel-diary observation and momentum, but the crudeness of Forster's sensibility is illustrated by the climactic trope he invents for the coming together of Fielding and Miss Quested: "A friendliness, as of dwarfs shaking hands, was in the air."[2] *Howards End*—"undoubtedly Forster's masterpiece,"

2 Wayne C. Booth, a snob about dwarfs as Forster is about women, gets awfully excited pointing out that "no one in the book is capable of that simile except the narrator, the one character who sees the full value of being sensible, honest, and subtle, and yet sees that men and women may exemplify these virtues and still be only amiable dwarfs." *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago, 1961), p. 189.

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says Lionel Trilling—is part boy-scout oath ("Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height . . ."), part Put-Christ-back-into-Christmas ("How many of these vacillating shoppers and tired shop-assistants realized that it was a divine event . . . ?"), part *East Lynne* ("he was rotten at the core"), part snobbery again ("She was a rubbishy little creature"), part wisdom ("Science explained people, but could not understand them"), and all lies. As for the posthumous collection, *Albergo Empedocle and Other Writings,* it's a miscellany of very old pieces: the long and disagreeable crypto-homosexual fantasy named in the title; some unpretentious essays and reviews about war, India, and literature; Cambridge *juvenilia,* among which (in an amusing takeoff on *Agamemnon*) appears the deathless stage direction—"Exit Aegisthus, leading Chrysothemis weeping and Electra kicking his shins."

In one of the reviews Forster, liberated Edwardian, attacks the Victorian dispensation, which deserves everything he can think of to throw at it. What's equally obvious is that (with the great exception of Lawrence) English novelists since the Victorians haven't been able to do better than class-writing and coterie-writing, provincialism, Bloomsburyism, irony (of the twentieth-century, facing-both-ways variety: if you like it, I mean it; if you don't, I'm camping it up), nothing much going on but much gesticulation and manner, tricks. In the rare instances—Anthony Powell is one—where a large *oeuvre* is produced, it has none of the substantiality and assurance of even the minor Victorians.

Nor is copiousness itself necessarily a virtue. On the publication of the latest volume of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* the Duke of Gloucester remarked to its author: "Another damned, thick, square book! Always scribble, scribble, scribble! Eh! Mr. Gibbon?" *A Dance to the Music of Time: Third Movement* (consisting of three novels—*The Valley of Bones, The Soldier's Art, The Military Philosophers*) and *Books Do Furnish a Room* have now appeared, Installments Seven through Ten of the most interminable soap-opera since Australopithecus; and the Duke of Gloucester of blessed memory, if he were still among us, would no doubt be competent to take proper notice of the event.[3] Unarmed with the Duke's prerogative of forthrightness, the reviewer is tempted to try something witty and indirect, like parody, for example, of Powell's clairvoyant-narrator trick: "There was about him something melancholy, perhaps even tragic, that was hard to define"; "She had a quiet, rather

[3] Eight years ago I reviewed the first six installments ("Man Alive," THE HUDSON REVIEW, Spring 1964). The reader who checks will discover that I did my best to describe Powell's few, unvarying, and preposterous assumptions and procedures (as well as his single success, *The Acceptance World*), and will understand why I am hard put now to say more about fiction as unprecedented in simple-mindedness as in length.

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sad manner, suggesting one of those reserved, well behaved, fairly peevish women, usually of determined character, often to be found as wives, or ex-wives, of notably dissipated men"; "As the gas flared up again, its hiss for some inexplicable reason suggested an explanation of why Pamela had married Widmerpool." Or of Powell's everybody-somehow-reminds-me-of-everybody-else trick: "There was something of Kedward about him; something, too, which I could not define, of my brother-in-law, Chips Lovell"; "When I first met Umfraville I had noticed some resemblance to Buster Foxe, now revealed as that similarity companionship in early life confers on people"; "He had a voice of horrible refinement, which must have taken years to perfect, and somewhat recalled that of Howard Craggs, the left-wing publisher." Or of Powell's Peter-Pithy-used-to-pontificate trick: "Was he, in principle, regardless of personal idiosyncrasy, what Sir Gavin Walpole-Wilson used to call 'a man of taste'?"; "In short, Frederica's most notable characteristic was what Molly Jeavons called her 'dreadful correctness' "; "Thought I'd try Kenya, the great open spaces where men are men, as Charles Stringham used to say." Or of Powell's sudden-rash-of-associationism trick—

> [Lord Aberavon's] name was merely memorable to myself as deceased owner of Mr Deacon's *Boyhood of Cyrus,* the picture in the Walpole-Wilsons' hall, which always made me think of Barbara Goring when I had been in love with her in pre-historic times. Lord Aberavon had been Barbara Goring's grandfather; Eleanor Walpole-Wilson's grandfather too. I wondered what had happened to Barbara, whether her husband, Johnny Pardoe (who also owned a house in the country of which Gwatkin spoke), had been recalled to the army. Eleanor, lifelong friend of my sister-in-law, Norah Tolland, was now, like Norah herself, driving cars for some women's service. . . .

Cobwebs and dishwater, condescension, malice, inertness, tics, false specification, simpering imprecision, endlessly unsorted gossip, on and on and on, not preliminaries or bridge-passages but the staple, the thing itself, the world as a closetful of baseless opinions (even in dialogue Powell's characters are empty coats dangling on the coathangers of his opinons about them); because none of these quotations, sad to admit, is parody at all, they justly represent Powell's range and are from one or another of the four new novels, of which the only startling sentence occurs in *The Valley of Bones,* page 197: "For a moment the name conveyed nothing." It's the only such moment in the so far two and a half thousand pages of Powell's otherwise unstoppable or immovable name-spinning machine.

"When the time," said *Time* about *The Music of Time,* "comes for the historian to get the sense of what life was like for the British between and during the two big wars . . . he can wrap up the whole

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era with Anthony Powell's incalculably brilliant series. . . ." Shortly, if not sooner, some hack who indefinably resembles the Droeshout engraving of Shakespeare, with under the earlobes a touch of my brother-in-law Legs Diamond, will write something comparable about an American novelist who bids fair to break all the track records long before she's forty. Joyce Carol Oates was born in 1938: she has already published volumes of verse, volumes of short stories, and five novels; among her many prizes, she won the National Book Award for her fourth novel, *them;* when the time comes for the historian to get the sense of what life was like in the U. S. between FDR and Nixon, he can empty out the whole sack of Oates and scratch around in the true grain of America, incalculably caustic, homicidal (nay bloody and violent), scurfy, cruddy, gritty, nutty, running the national gamut from Dustin Hoffman to King Kong.

Typical activities in Oates novels are arson, rape, riot, mental breakdown, murder (plain and fancy, with excursions into patricide, matricide, uxoricide, mass filicide), suicide. None of these is more than sketchily motivated, because experience and feeling are by their nature mysteries, dissociated and inexplicable ("All of my writing," says Miss Oates, "is about the mystery of human emotions"), though it's not clear why inexplicable mysteries are always nasty rather than nice. Typical and predictable equations: man = irrational brute force; woman = irrational treacherousness; love = hate; passion = murder. The typical Oates plot begins at the bottom of the Depression (the extended time-scheme seems to have epic intentions, but its chief effect is a sluggish opening tempo); meanders for a hundred pages or so through a naturalistic account of uninterrupted misery over the long years (an account founded on the axiom that the poor, having read the sociology texts, spend decades at a stretch without a moment's peace or pleasure); and abruptly bursts into a carnival of arson, rape, riot, murder, *etc.* If Miss Oates begins with a whimper, she ends with a bang: *With Shuddering Fall* ends with a probable suicide, vigilante brutality, and the heroine's commitment to a mental hospital (in a "happy" epilogue, she returns home); *A Garden of Earthly Delights* —the title is ironic—ends with attempted matricide, accidental quasi-patricide,[4] suicide, and the heroine's commitment to a mental hospital; *Expensive People* ends with matricide; *them* tunes up with a brisk little inaugural murder, proceeds to a mental breakdown and an attempted murder, and ends with an urban riot and a cop-killing (by the hero of course). In *Wonderland,* which begins on an unexpected

[4] This calls for a gloss. The boy aims at his mother ("No, you're not going to shoot me! You think you can shoot me? Me? You think you can kill your own mother? People can't do things like that, they can't pull the trigger! You can't pull the trigger! You're weak . . ."), but "at the last instant" he "jerked the gun to one side and when he pulled the trigger it was the old man he hit." The "old man" is, as far as the world knows and even as far as the boy himself has been told, the boy's father; but . . .

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upbeat with a family massacre, Miss Oates makes an effort to splice her horrors (necrophiliac heterosexual cannibalism for one: a male doctor reports having taken home a female cadaver's uterus, broiled it, and eaten it) in at regular intervals among the dreary daily round of things: the dissociation and craziness are more evenly distributed; but the effect is rearrangement and aggravation rather than difference.

The novels are quite American in numerous extra-literary ways, influenced for instance by movie images and conventions out of the Hollywood Age of Gilt: the character Max in the first novel is the gross, sweating, middle-aged fat man with a veddy cultivated line of gab but (or therefore) some kind of sex pervert, played by Sydney Greenstreet; a scene in *them* (when Jules first breaks in on Nadine at her home) is, with wild incongruity, in the manner of a Cary Grant-Irene Dunne roguish romantic comedy of the 'thirties; the episodes of rural poverty have the varnished surface of Hollywood social realism; *A Garden of Earthly Delights* presents the triangle of passionate woman, footloose lover, and patient wealthy husband that wrung many a handkerchief in the old Bijou; pregnancy is automatic with the first dime in the meter. Out of the same period (if you'll excuse the expression) comes the women's-magazine diction that Miss Oates seems to be trying to recollect and preserve: "in the hot icy [!] gleam of his eyes that held her rigid," the heroine sees "the uneasiness of the predatory beast that suspects he can never achieve satiation," but she'll be glad to give him a whirl. " 'She isn't like you, Clara,' Revere said once. 'She isn't a happy woman.' " "Her hands fell onto her stomach and she thought fiercely that she would betray anybody for this baby; she would even kill if she had to. She would do anything. She would kill Lowry himself if she had to." Shades of Stella Dallas. The quality of the writing, in the first two novels especially, is often low and sometimes beneath contempt; Miss Oates teaches herself to write better, at least more carefully and more professionally, in the later novels; but she never gives up her original preoccupations and her mimicry of heart-clutching femaleness.

The only one of the novels that is more than clinically interesting is *Expensive People,* which is also the only one that attempts comedy and satire. Its literary satire manages nothing better than mock-reviews written by the author in what she takes to be the style of one weekly pundit or another: "It is sheer cant (though speculative) that the product of a mad, feverish mind must be in itself mad and feverish . . ."; or she indulges in juvenile hi-jinks with names—"Johns Behemoth Boys' School," "Vastvalley Country Club," "Dr. Saskatoon." The suburban comedy, however, has moments of shrewdness; the narrator's mother is the only realized character in Miss Oates's novels, a bright, likable, seductive, and impossible woman; and there's a wonderful cameo chapter about "my dog Spark" ("When I was very little Father and Nada gave me a nice Christmas present: a little dog named

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Spark"), an immortal creature that keeps getting run over by laundry trucks and being brought back a few days later, "safe and sound from the doctor," looking nearly the same as ever. But most of the book wastes its time in the company of the narrator, who turns sniper and eventually shoots his mother dead.

The puzzle in these five novels (when they aren't beneath contempt) is less their crazy violence than the author's disinterest in what provokes it, or rather her disinterest in the possibility that human feeling may have any natural rhythm or logic or direction or duration at all. It's not that she seems to be trying cynically for sensational effects: the effects aren't sensational, they don't seem cynically contrived; but they are in fact revolting—mainly because she hasn't paid attention, because it's sinful for a writer to remain so perversely innocent (Stella Dallas or Lady Macbeth) while developing considerable skill and expending formidable energy in the practice of the literary genre that evolved to deal with the rhythm, logic, direction, duration—the complete architecture—of human feeling. In an Oates novel, something disgusting and destructive will happen on the next page or in the next chapter, and the reader can't even conclude that it came from somewhere or will issue in something else: the only inference is that life is causelessly vile, and for such an inference the immense machinery of fiction is futile; characters emerging and time passing are unnecessary; an aphorism will do. One grasps at straws: maybe the author is perfectly normal, except for thinking that these are the sorts of things that happen in books.

Dreadful things happen in love in the ripeness of time, maybe we can't hear the lesson too often. But in an Oates novel, since life is lunacy and love is hate and passion is murder, very soon rather than late one or both of the lovers will lapse for long enough—say, the woman doesn't have an orgasm and feels despondent—to demonstrate these equivalences as a *whim*:

> She continued walking alongside him, but on the far side of the sidewalk. Then, out of her pocket, she took an object—Jules looked and saw at first a small black purse. Then he looked and saw a gun. She held this out toward him as if waving him away.
>
> "What are you doing? My God!" Jules said, more in alarm for her than for himself, fearful of her being seen. "What are you doing? Nadine? Put that back, hide it!"
>
> She walked alongside him as if forcing him along. With the gun she kept him at a distance, assessing him. But there was no recognition in her face. Her beauty had gone all into hardness, in vacuity.
>
> "Nadine, you're not going to shoot me, not me," Jules said, astonished. "You love me, I love you—don't you love me?"
>
> She pulled the trigger. The bullet struck him somewhere in the chest, a terrible blow. Jules reeled, seeing the sunshine shattered

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in the windshields of an acre of large, gleaming, expensive cars.
The spirit of the Lord departed from Jules.

This misunderstanding occurs in *them.* In *Wonderland* (which should have been titled *it*), Miss Oates surpasses herself from the very beginning, which is a lengthy naturalistic description, from a boy's point of view, of a Depression Christmas for a small-town family afflicted by the father's recent loss of his business (ironic counterpoint for the boy sitting in the car in which his father is driving him home: "The figure of Santa Claus seems to be flying through the closed-in air of the store windows, with his reindeer and sleigh, bundled with presents, one hand lifted in a merry salute"). The episode culminates in the boy's discovery, as he enters the house, of his butchered family:

> There is a jumble of bodies, arms and blood, drifts of hair like field grass, stiff with blood. His sister Jean lies with something shattered beside her—a lamp, maybe—and there is white glass mixed with the blood. A lampshade is splattered with blood. Jean's face is turned away; no, it had bled away, half of it is soaked in the rug, half of it is gone . . .

and so on. The murderer is his father, who thereupon pursues him through the dark trying to finish the job. Now such things do happen in the world, as we are reminded later in the novel by Dr. Pedersen's scrapbook (called "The Book of Fates"): we have seen them memorialized in brief newspaper accounts, minus the slaughterhouse details that Miss Oates sees fit to supply, minus also the painstaking examination of all these lives that the average reasonable novelist would have the prudence or decency to supply.

Wonderland isn't a diabolist outrage like *Justine* or *Philosophy in the Bedroom,* not little-green-men fantasy or gallows humor, not even Poësque thrills or melodrama; it just doesn't know any better. The boy, Jesse, having escaped his father (who—surprise!—commits suicide), survives to grow up in one household after another, finally Dr. Pedersen's, which seems intended to be sinister but instead is an intermittently amusing sideshow of antiseptic obesity, presided over by the unctuous doctor (Sydney Greenstreet again, or maybe Robert Morley in a change-of-pace rôle): "Perfection is difficult, Hildie, but ultimately it is not as difficult as imperfection. The demands we make upon ourselves constitute our salvation. It is necessary to be perfect. It is not necessary to live." The supreme horror in the book, in all of Oates, is a gluttony episode (like the daydream of a precocious eight-year-old kept too long in bed with a boring illness), in which first Jesse and Mrs. Pedersen, runaways from the doctor, together eat four Chinese dinners in her hotel room ("pressed almond duck, beef with Chinese vegetables, shrimps in lobster sauce, chicken chow mein. He had to wait for the food to be prepared and his mouth began to

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water. So he bought a few candy bars . . ."); then Jesse alone another "handful of candy bars" and, sitting on the floor in the hall outside her room, four more of the same dinners by himself ("His stomach was an enormous open hole, a raw hole, a wound . . . the Chinese food was so delicate, so thin, there was no substance to it. . . . He should have bought some hamburgers, some good solid American cheeseburgers from the hotel's coffee shop . . ."); then to a diner where he orders "six hamburgers with chili sauce on them, three side dishes of French fries, and a Coke. He finished the Coke before the food was ready, so he ordered another. . . ." On the next page Jesse goes off to the University of Michigan, does well there, reduces to normal weight, pushes on through medical school, marries unhappily ("She had married him but she did not know him"), becomes a well known surgeon, discusses brain transplants, almost has an affair ("He loved her, but he was not in love with her. He did not love her with this fierce, sickening certainty . . ."), is upset by the assassination of President Kennedy, inherits $600,000, opens a clinic, tracks down his daughter (who has joined the itinerant drug-culture), carries her to a nearby boat, and drifts away with her—

> "All of you . . . everyone . . . all my life, everyone . . . always you are going away from me and you don't come back to explain. . . ." [all ellipses the author's] Jesse wept.
>
> He embraced her. He clutched at her thighs, her emaciated thighs, her legs. He pressed his face against her knees, weeping.
>
> The boat drifted most of the night. Near dawn it was picked up by a large handsome cruiser, a Royal Mounted Police boat, a dazzling sight with its polished wood and metal and its trim of gold and blue.

The End.

Miss Oates is the current *Wunderkind* among American novelists. The last two novelists who had their own strong claims to that title a few years ago, Philip Roth and John Updike, are also on the scene with new books, though it's sobering to imagine that Roth, who was a gifted, intelligent, and hard-working writer, thinks of *Our Gang* as a book. Savor this pungent satire:

> TRICKY: Look! I've stopped sweating!
> LEGAL COACH: See? You've weathered another crisis, Mr. President.
> TRICKY: Wow! That makes six hundred and *one!*

Remember Johns Behemoth Boys' School? Roth has fun with names too: Trick E. Dixon, J. Edgar Heehaw, General Poppapower, Lyin' B. Johnson, John F. Charisma, Robert F. Charisma, the Reverend Billy Cupcake—but who can go on without breaking up? (Not Dwight Macdonald, who "laughed out loud 16 times and giggled

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internally a statistically unverifiable amount. In short, a masterpiece.") To speculate: Some years ago Roth got tired of being the most promising young underpaid American writer and plugged into Chase Manhattan with *Portnoy's Complaint,* the first kosher pornographic novel. Flushed with triumph, he has now excogitated the first political satire suitable for performance at junior high-school assemblies. Testy readers have been heard to say that political satire requires wit and point. It also benefits by appearing to take a modicum of risk, as when Paul Krassner revealed in *The Realist* exactly what Lyin' B. did to the corpse of John F. Charisma aboard Air Force One on the way back from Dallas; or even when, in the year of *Macbird,* the entire Yale Drama School lay awake nights quivering in delicious expectation of a panty-raid by J. Edgar Heehaw and Bill Bucktooth, Jr. clad in red-white-and-blue non-union suits with the Superman emblem in Day-glo mauve across the crotch.

As for Updike, he continues to do well what he has always done well. His special skill and sympathy have always been for American places and atmospheres, textures, idioms, items, the pathos of the consumer society. Nobody is better at accompanying the American male on the short Sunday tour of the open shelves of an American drugstore:

> Up near Ninth and Weiser they find a drugstore open. Thermos bottles, sunglasses, shaving lotion, Kodak film, plastic baby pants: nothing for his mother. He wants something big, something bright, something to get through to her. Realgirl Liquid Make-Up, Super Plenamins, Non-Smear polish remover, Nudit for the legs. A rack of shampoo-in hair color, a different smiling cunt on every envelope: Snow Queen Blond, Danish Wheat, Killarney Russet, Parision Spice, Spanish Black Wine. Nelson plucks him by the sleeve of his white shirt and leads to where a Sunbeam Clipmaster and a Roto-Shine Magnetic Electric Shoe Polisher nestle side by side, glossily packaged. "She doesn't wear shoes any more, just slippers," he says, " and she never cut her hair that I can remember. It used to hang down to her waist." But his attention is drawn to a humidifier for $12.95. From the picture on the box, it looks like a fat flying saucer. No matter how immobile she gets, it would be there. . . . He moves on to a Kantleek Water Bottle and a 2½-inch reading glass and dismisses both as morbid. . . .

(Updike, not Oates, for some part of an image of mid-twentieth-century America.) If only he didn't keep coming to morbid items—"He stops at a corner grocery for a candy bar, an Oh Henry, then at the Burger Bliss on Weiser, dazzling in its lake of parking space, for a Lunar Special (double cheeseburger with an American flag stuck into the bun) and a vanilla milkshake, that tastes toward the bottom of chemical sludge"—if only he didn't fall to brooding, as he

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usually does, about whether any of these mere American things has a high enough number on the priority list of Human Values, both he and his novels (and, for that matter, America) would be better off, he would be likely to achieve far more often moments as full of accurate and contradictory vibrations as the one in which Rabbit, having retired early, is awakened by his wife's arrival in the conjugal bed:

> He hears from a mournful smothered radio noise that Nelson is still awake. He thinks he should get up and say good night, give the kid a blessing, but a weight crushes him while light persists into his bedroom, along with the boy's soft knocking noises, opening and shutting doors, looking for something to do. Since infancy Rabbit sleeps best when others are up. . . .
>
> Someting big slithers into the bed. Janice. The fluorescent dial on the bureau is saying five of eleven, its two hands merged into one finger. She is warm in her nightie. Skin is warmer than cotton. He was dreaming about a parabolic curve, trying to steer on it, though the thing he was trying to steer was fighting him, like a broken sled.

But such confidence is uncommon in Updike (when he doesn't have it, he's liable to thumb through mythological dictionaries or be Byzantinely sentimental about sex), and this time he is burdened with a huge ambition that runs the book right into the ground: nothing less than to show the youth-cult and the Black Revolution in collision and collusion with the blue-collar American male. Nobody could manage it, certainly Updike doesn't; and *Rabbit Redux,* which begins appealingly as a rather impassioned defense of the benighted, aging, cuckolded, embittered, bouncy Rabbit, ends in the Oatesian futility of sniping, arson, violent death, and other features of urban apocalypse.

One way out of the mess is geographical, another is formal: you can leave the country and be American elsewhere; you can drop fiction and try telling the truth for a change. "Ann Cornelisen," says the dustjacket of *Torregreca,* "was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1926. She was educated at the Girls Latin School of Chicago, the Baldwin School in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, and at Vassar (class of 1948). In 1954, she went to Florence to study archaeology; instead, she became interested in the Save the Children Fund, and went to work on a semi-volunteer basis for that British-sponsored charitable agency. For the next ten years she helped to set up nursery centers in the mountainous, impoverished regions of Southern Italy, an experience that provides the point of departure for *Torregreca.* At the present time she lives in an apartment at the top of an ancient palazzo in Rome, and is at work on a second book," which turned out to be *Vendetta of Silence.*

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In *Torregreca* Miss Cornelisen is quite the finest flower of finishing-school morality, busy, useful, humorous, and brave:

> In time I became a specialist, one of the few who can fix a toilet float while confuting the Montessori System or expounding on the simplicities of Bowlby's theories of child development, and too I developed that all important quality—*Serietà*. In Southern Italy even the simplest project involves a crochet of relationships and has no hope of success without that intangible aura of respectability. *Serietà* is more external than a moral code. It is proclaimed by a conservative, almost dowdy way of dressing and a manner, slightly detached, very calm, that suggests incorruptibility. I worked on my *serietà* until men lounging in piazzas no longer considered me a loose woman even though I drove a car, smoked, and enjoyed a coffee or rum punch in a public bar. Indeed I doubt they considered me a woman at all.

At the outset the people seem quaint to her, because so they are by Anglo-Saxon standards: for example Don Gaetano, the postmaster, and Don Domenico, the bank director, coming out on the square every day at noon to breathe the air and enjoy a good leisurely look at everybody but each other, family reasons having for twenty years kept each from acknowledging the other's existence. The quaintness doesn't evaporate, it becomes one quality among many as she moves in to spend the winters and talk and listen and carry on her work. Her curiosity and inwardness about the village and its inhabitants—"men, women, and nuns"—gradually dissolve her resistances (as well as theirs) but not her intelligence: she is as tough and alert about the village as a matriarch about her family. For finally *Torregreca* is a book about family:

> I said I wouldn't get married in Torregreca where everybody'd remember when the baby came too soon, so we had to borrow money to go to Pompeii. It was June of 1950 and hot as hell; that was my first train trip and I'm not apt to forget it. We rode all night—me and Michele, and Tina and Michele's brother. They had to come too, to be the witnesses. Tina complained all the way. "Why couldn't you get married in Torregreca? You should have hired a car so we didn't have to stand on the platform for two hours waiting. You better make this trip fun or *guai à te*." On and on she went. Michele got mad, said we were *cafoni* and he wouldn't be seen with us. We had to wait hours for the church to open and then I fainted in the middle of the ceremony and they dragged me out into the sacristy. Michele ranted and didn't want to tip the sacristan who'd taken care of me. Then we had to get a room. Michele said he knew a place, and walked us miles and miles in the heat until I thought I'd faint again. He made the deal with the

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> people; all four of us in the same room and the place smelled like a garbage dump. My God, I'll never forget the flies in there, either! Michele took us to a wine shop for something to eat and got drunk, so drunk he picked a fight with the owner of the place and then turned over a cart in the street outside. He said it was all our fault, we were nothing but *cafoni* and he wouldn't stay with us another day. We were going back to Torregreca. We rode all night again, missed the bus at the station and had to wait all day until the five o'clock trip. When we got home, Nunzio gave us a potato and two turnips for our wedding dinner!

So it's shocking to discover that *Vendetta of Silence,* coming back to the same place and people, crams them into a silly plot and turns all these lives into fiction and prettiness: notebooks, letters, flashbacks, newspaper accounts, detective-story suspense, the Oatesian mystery of the human heart—

> A catch deep in her throat made her voice break. When she went on, the silken timbre was muted by some emotion close to controlled despair, if such is possible. "And I had hoped never to see San Basilio again. Never! Never again!"

—all the gimcrackery of novels, plus a smugness in the style which suggests that since *Torregreca* she has forgotten everything:

> In the harsh light of an autumn morning the apricot house glitters on its lone promontory with prim self-importance. It would play castle to its fief, the town across the way, and like other fallen aristocrats, will not admit that the world no longer measures power in these terms. It preens in vain. I am its only serf, only I am subject to its powers, though I have not yet learned that. I watch people who come here, sure that finally someone will share the sense of peace and arrival that floods over me. No one ever does. . . .

No real toad would be caught dead in so imaginary a garden.

Documentaries, however, aren't pure pulsing vitality. *Torregreca* was *written,* it was therefore selected from a mass of materials, the names were changed (to comfort the publisher's attorneys), much editing was done: not only the author-editor's voice but the English language is there all the time to remind us that the Torresi aren't coming to us on ETV without a sponsor. Another recent documentary book, *Akenfield,* makes the riskier choice of appearing to let its characters speak for themselves; and since the "editor," Ronald Blythe, tells us nothing of his method (Are these all taped interviews? Where were they conducted? Who, if anybody, was present besides the speaker and the interviewer? What is cut out or rearranged? What is changed besides the names? Did those interviewed have a chance to hear the tape or read the transcript and approve it or demand modifications, suppressions?), since occasionally we can't

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help wondering what Blythe is doing almost out of sight around the near corner while his speakers have their say, the effect of the book is less unambiguous than it needed to be. (Luckily, though, Blythe's interstitial comment is arty, quite unlike the talk of the villagers.) That qualification apart, *Akenfield* is an irreplaceable thesaurus of recollections and observations about English rural life during the first two thirds of the twentieth century. There will always be an England, there always was, and the continuity between all those past and future ghosts is this company that, in its occupations and quietness and solid flesh, would have been country-cousins to Chaucer or the Venerable Bede.

None of these realists would take the past back on a platter. "Fred Mitchell, aged eight-five, horseman": "You had to nearly perish to bring a family up then. . . . The farmers were sharp with us. . . . I learnt never to answer a word. I dursn't say nothing. Today you can be a man with men, but not then. That is how it was. It will never be like that again. I lived when other men could do what they liked with me. We feared so much." "Leonard Thompson, aged seventy-one, farm-worker," describes the village school: ". . . useless. The farmers came and took boys away from it when they felt like it, the parson raided it for servants. The teacher was a respectable woman who did her best. . . . I looked forward to leaving school so that I could get educated. I knew that education was in books, not in school: there were no books there." The clergyman: "I came to them when they had, for several generations, been literally worked to death. . . . I have sometimes dared to question the incredible perfection attached to certain tasks. . . . The harvest would not have been the less if the furrows wavered a little. But, of course, a straight furrow was all that a man was left with." The young political organizer: "The women never lost their independence during the bad days as the men did. The men were beaten because the farms took every ounce of their physical strength and, as they had no great mental strength because of lack of education, they were left with nothing. Their physical strength was their pride and as soon as it was gone they became timid." "Emily Leggett, aged seventy-nine, horseman's widow": "We took our poorness naturally. We knew within a little what we were going to get and that there would never be any more. So that was that." But it's too easy to stay with a single theme of this book, which is a world without exclusions: "The next morning, along she comes, straight to where I'm about to start. Her arms were stuck out full length and she was all smiles. She got her mouth on my face and, my God, she must have thought it was her breakfast, or something."

It's a book with no end of pride and distinctness. These taciturn, "slow" farmers notice everything, as Leonard Thompson shows describing the burial of the dead (fifty years before!) at Gallipoli:

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> We pushed them into the sides of the trench but bits of them kept getting uncovered and sticking out, like people in a badly made bed. Hands were the worst; they would escape from the sand, pointing, begging—even waving! There was one which we all shook when we passed, saying "Good morning," in a posh voice. Everybody did it. The bottom of the trench was springy like a mattress because of all the bodies underneath. At night, when the stench was worse, we tied crêpe round our mouths and noses. This crêpe had been given to us because it was supposed to prevent us being gassed. The flies entered the trenches at night and lined them completely with a density which was like moving cloth. We killed millions by slapping our spades along the trench walls but the next night it would be just as bad. We were all lousy and we couldn't stop shitting because we had caught dysentery. We wept, not because we were frightened but because we were so dirty.

"The war"—the First World War—is a central fact in the lives of those old enough to have been through it, and Emily Leggett remembers her husband dead in the war: ". . . when we married his wages were 13*s.* a week. He used to give me 12*s.* and keep a bob for his pocket. We were children together, then lovers, then I married him. He lived in the next door double-dweller. We were both nineteen when we wed. A beautiful boy he was. It seems a long time now since I saw him. He had six horses to look after and he used to get up at five o'clock every morning to bait [feed] them." But the war took him: "My poor young husband!"

"The old people have gone," says "Sammy Whitelaw, aged fifty-eight, farrier," "and have taken a lot of truth out of the world with them." Yes, but here they are with their ancestors and descendants to the first and last generations. "I have never found time to read," says one of the younger men. "I am a participant." It's helpful to be reminded now and then, while novelists persist in their noisy betrayals of human dignity, that living has a longer history than reading, and truth than fiction.

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PATRICIA MEYER SPACKS

A Chronicle of Women

AT ALL LEVELS OF SOPHISTICATION and literary skill, despite considerable diversity of subject and technique, this sampling of recent books by women affords a surprisingly consistent—if often depressing—view of the feminine psyche. Seeking the proper attitudes toward the self, obsessed with the need for love, aware of the potential power in conventional feminine postures, women still seem—in the name of "modesty" or "self-abnegation"—to wish to evade self-confrontation and self-display. If their sense of self disappears as a result, they can often take comfort in the loss of a burden.

Memoirs misshapen by excessive self-protectiveness and propriety can be as illuminating as those which directly reveal the self.[1] Although autobiography thrives on the illusion of self-exposure, self-exposure (that persistent humiliating dream of nakedness in an elegant restaurant) is dangerous. Such clumsy reminiscences as those of Joan Crawford and gospel singer Anita Bryant avoid its dangers but reveal the assumptions which govern their authors' sense of the permissible. Both writers form their self-presentation by their fantasies of what a woman should be. Miss Crawford's ideal woman is a triumphant manipulator of appearance who believes makeup a crucial obligation and looks in mirrors constantly, "a form of narcissism that pays off." Her husband, the actress reports, "never saw a laundry bag, a dust cloth, or a hair curler. I hope he never knew that such things existed!" As the book deteriorates into random recipes for facial masks and pork chop dinners, prescriptions for exercise programs and husband-pleasing, drawing morals instead of insights from experience, it declares its author's conviction that a woman's value is contingent on her ability to act, in both senses of that verb. By acting she protects herself from knowledge of herself.

Anita Bryant declares problems the province of God, prayer as important as potty training in the rearing of children. Fearing aggressiveness, fearing even self-assertion, she disclaims responsibility for her actions, explaining success as "being used by the Lord as never before," compensating for failure by renewed bouts of prayer, dealing

[1] MY WAY OF LIFE, by *Joan Crawford*. Simon & Schuster. $7.50. AMAZING GRACE, by *Anita Bryant*. Revell. $3.95. MYSELF AMONG OTHERS, by *Ruth Gordon*. Atheneum. $10. THE GIFT HORSE, by *Hildegard Knef*. McGraw-Hill. $7.95. OUT OF MY TIME, by *Marya Mannes*. Doubleday. $7.95. CARRINGTON: LETTERS AND EXTRACTS FROM HER DIARIES, ed. *David Garnett*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. $12.50. MAD IN PURSUIT, by *Violette Leduc*, tr. *Derek Coltman*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $8.95. GROWING UP FEMALE IN AMERICA: TEN LIVES, ed. *Eve Merriam*. Doubleday. $7.95.

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with the difficulty of finding a babysitter by attributing its solution to God ("Imagine how we felt . . . when the Lord provided a really gorgeous one for us.").

Why suffer through such junk? To learn what it inadvertently teaches: that *control* is an obsessive issue which women find it hard to confront directly. Joan Crawford substitutes control of appearance for control of experience; Anita Bryant enthusiastically yields all control to God. Ruth Gordon's "kind of autobiography" (a less arduous reading experience) justifies its author by her friends, avoiding the question of how, or whether, she has shaped her life by claiming only the role of witness. Her frantic concern with relationship extends to her readers, to whom she directs coy questions ("What's your rule for choosing a present?") and pseudo-maternal commands ("*Think* about it"). Alienated from her own experience, she values herself because others value her and because her world is glamorous—she has seen Alexander Woolcott do interesting things. Relentlessly gay, boasting that her pelvis hasn't fallen at the age of seventy-five, she creates a defensive maze of good stories in order to evade the dangers of true autobiography.

Hildegard Knef dramatizes more fully the conflicting impulses toward power and powerlessness implicit in these other lives. An overwhelming list of the illnesses and accidents she has survived summarizes her essential experience and defines her heroism. Survival is triumph, for any German growing up in the thirties, for any woman. Miss Knef becomes angry when those whose families have died in Auschwitz find it hard to be cordial to her, a German. She feels unimplicated in Nazi crimes because, despite her claims to be admired for her energy in shaping her career, she understands herself primarily as victim, psychically identified with the Jews rather than their executioners, doomed to powerlessness though seeking power. Casting herself as heroine, she nonetheless shows events denying her control of her life; an astrologer becomes her mentor. Such figures as Hitler and Sam Goldwyn, hardly comparable in their public effects, assume equivalent roles for her, as wielders and deniers of power. The autobiography ends with an episode in which the author's daughter "learns fast" what Miss Knef has learned slowly: that one controls experience, however strong one's will, only by controlling one's responses to it.

Endurance is the fundamental achievement of all who succeed, but women sometimes become angry at the realization that for them it may define the bounds of psychic possibility. Marya Mannes, thrice divorced, dedicated to significant action as self-definition, observes that she'd like to be a man in order to have a wife—to take care of her, as the world will not. "You can be anything you want to be," her father told her when she was ten: but he was wrong. To do important work in the world, yet be an emotionally fulfilled woman: this

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may be impossible. Miss Mannes sees herself as a "spiritual hermaphrodite," man-part and woman-part at odds, her psyche containing also "another disturbing pair: creator and critic. C-1 would make something, C-2 would doubt it, or kill it. C-1 was full of illusions that C-2 would dissipate. Or was it the man who said 'I am good,' and the woman who said, 'Never good enough, because I am a woman'?" This kind of conflict permeates, and weakens, the autobiography, which seems formally inadequate to the chaos of reflection, emotion, and cast-off literary production it tries to contain. The struggle between self-doubt and self-affirmation is the substance of the book, a demonstration of a woman's difficulty in feeling in control of her destiny, her uncertainty as to how the parts of a personality can compose a plausible, acceptable whole.

Some women must accept themselves as unacceptable. Dora Carrington (1893-1932), a painter, lived for seventeen years with Lytton Strachey, briefly attempting marriage with Ralph Partridge, killing herself shortly after Strachey's death. Her letters and diaries, lacking in literary sophistication, are a record of pain, sex always at its root. "You know I have always hated being a woman. I think I mind much more than most women." Torn between heterosexual and homosexual impulse, Carrington suffered a devastating version of the internal struggle Marya Mannes reports. "Always this struggle with two insides, which makes one disjointed, unreliable and secretive." Work could not solve her problem, for her talent seems to have been inadequate to her needs. The tie with the homosexual Strachey provided love and guidance, that external control which, her suicide suggests, is essential to the woman whose internal division makes her incapable of self-direction. This sad but absorbing book (absorbing partly on the level of gossip, with its stories of the Woolfs, the Lawrences, David Garnett, Strachey himself) seems almost a parable of the feminine plight, its components exaggerated to a grotesque point which makes existence itself impossible.

Violette Leduc's latest installment of her autobiography provides a more up-to-date version of similar feminine anguish, anguish here exploited as part of an unpleasant drama of power. Miss Leduc dreams of aphrodisiacs which would make "words . . . be in love" with her, dreams of controlling the universe by her emotions, reports infatuations, rejections, confides her masturbations. Misery seems virtually her profession; and the sign of her emotional and moral superiority. In a self-indulgent moment she flings herself to the pavement; an old woman asks her why. "Surely at your age you can tell when someone is desperately unhappy," the narrator replies. Proudly? Angrily? Her autobiography seems an aggressive attempt to exercise an aphrodisiac effect on the reader, making him not only witness but share the author's self-love, forcing him (worse, *her*) to accept suffering as self-justification and to yield to it as power.

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But suffering for women is more often simply an emblem of helplessness. Eve Merriam has brought together ten autobiographical fragments from American women with birthdates from 1783 to 1890: an old Indian, an early woman astronomer, a labor organizer, a Civil War wife, a bride crossing the prairie in a covered wagon. The introduction is inept and the material often severely truncated, but these documents reveal how rigidly women's lives have been formed by external expectations and how women internalize those expectations. The Civil War officer's wife, seeing a soldier-friend suffer a terrible wound, blocks her impulse to run to his aid because of "the crowd of soldiers around the [wounded] men; and if my husband should come and see me there—the only lady—he might think I did wrong." The pioneer bride, far advanced in pregnancy, castigates herself for her "inward gloom," which she finds "unnatural and morbid"; after her baby's birth she writes of herself in the third person, to prevent her narrative's seeming "egotistical." A New England schoolgirl worries—as schoolgirls always do—"that no person whom I could love would ever think me sufficiently worthy to love me."

Unhappiness is common among these women; anger is not. Yet in the context of action, anger may emerge. The labor organizer gleefully describes women attacking scabs with brooms and frying pans; a suffragist endorses Emerson's "A healthy discontent is the first step to progress." Action, alternative to self-contempt, symbolizes power. Women who can assert themselves in larger than private contexts may discover the means to release the energy of hidden anger—energy capable of creating powerful literary as well as personal effects, energy conspicuously absent in all except Miss Mannes's autobiography, and inadequately contained by that.

Theoreticians of the feminine condition provide mirrors in which the image *is* largely shaped by anger.[2] Germaine Greer, using the "castration" of women as her central metaphor, claims that women have been deprived of their natural power, pressured toward self-sacrifice but denied any notion of what the self is. She describes the stereotypes of body, mind, and soul imposed upon women and acquiesced in by them, recounts the inequities of marriage, contraception, education, emphasizes women's common misery and resentment and the meaningless destructiveness that develop from such psychic states. Her anger is both functional and appealing, releasing literary inhibitions and generating conviction. She displays wit as well as vigor; personality informs her prose.

[2] THE FEMALE EUNUCH, by *Germaine Greer*. McGraw-Hill. $6.95. THE BABY TRAP, by *Ellen Peck*. Bernard Geis. $5.95. PURR, BABY, PURR, by *Lucianne Goldberg* and *Jeannie Sakol*. Hawthorn Books. $5.95. WOMEN AT YALE: LIBERATING A COLLEGE CAMPUS, by *Janet Lever* and *Pepper Schwartz*. Bobbs-Merrill. $6.95. THE LIBERATED WOMAN AND OTHER AMERICANS, by *Midge Decter*. Coward, McCann & Geoghegan. $6.95. MAN'S WORLD, WOMAN'S PLACE: A STUDY IN SOCIAL MYTHOLOGY, by *Elizabeth Janeway*. Morrow, $8.95.

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Yet *The Female Eunuch* is flawed by the unrecognized fear which underlies its anger. That fear emerges indirectly: in reminiscences about the writer's mother beating a three-year-old son to anger the boy's father, her father's increasing absence from home, her mother's denials of reality. Miss Greer's positive social recommendations, such as they are, reflect her terror of family life. She imagines the possibility of placing her children to be reared communally on a little farm in Sicily which she and other parents might visit, arguing that children nurtured thus would avoid the consequences of parental neurosis. She wishes to avoid the terrible burden of female power in the mother-child relationship, but also the powerlessness forced on women by emotional dependency: hence she recommends avoidance of marriage. Joyfully she advocates a revolution of joy, but betrays another version of that intolerable inner division that denies the meaning of so much feminine action. Admiring a woman who licks her own menstrual blood from her lover's penis, she does not examine the roots of her admiration. To conquer physical self-disgust may be a feminine triumph, but to conquer it by such a grotesque act of narcissism surely creates new problems. The pressure to compensate for fears imperfectly understood forces one toward the grotesque—of which the baby farm in Sicily is another instance.

Yet the pressures toward neurotic compensation themselves reflect women's impossible social position, which fosters and intensifies internal division. Books less honest than *The Female Eunuch* reveal even more clearly the potential hysteria of women trying to confront their condition. *The Baby Trap* is an unpleasant example, linking feminism more tightly to narcissism and advocating self-love as social program. All female problems are here displaced into the dangers of motherhood. If you have children, you will lose your attractiveness, your man, your interest in wider matters and your capacity to deal with them; you will lack money, pleasure, and stimulation. Alternately, the decision not to procreate implies endless emotional security, beauty, and licensed self-indulgence. The book exploits fear of the powerlessness implicit in a life of "housework and children," fantasies of the power of "a free life," promising eternal youth and beauty to those wary enough to limit their emotional commitments.

The same falsity dominates *Purr, Baby, Purr,* with its "program" for preserving femininity as power. "Wouldn't it be ironic if woman, in her struggle to get more of life's goodies, threw away her most potent weapon—her femininity, her special art of flirtation?" The woman is urged, "think of yourself as a switchboard with all sorts of lovely buttons and plug-ins for lighting up and making connections." She should fear Women's Lib, infiltrated by Lesbians, and fear success, which destroys attractiveness. In open combat women might lose what they have gained; they must exploit instead more devious ways of power.

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There is little to choose between these two books, both manipulative and advocating manipulation as the best response to inner division, outer pressure. *Women at Yale,* a record of Yale's first year of co-education, depressingly confirms these fundamental facts of feminine experience. Although its writing is clumsy and its conclusions over-simplified, its evidence is convincingly alarming. Fear of potential feminine achievement is strong in men and in women. Both prefer male doctors and professors to female ones, express doubts about the viability of women's combining marriage and career. Women do not trust one another; men do not trust women. There is a wide range of attitude about acceptable sexual practices, but an appallingly limited sense of social and intellectual possibility.

Midge Decter thinks that advocates of women's liberation are spoiled middle-class brats. Writing of the plight of the working woman, the mother of daughters, the divorcée, the new feminist, she observes that our culture fosters the illusions of a new romanticism which encourages women to believe in unrealizable possibilities of happiness and ease. Most women, she feels, refuse to confront the fact that life is hard. If they can face the strains of a man's world they are free to compete in it; if not, they should stop complaining.

One thinks of those Yale women, determined imitation-men. As the first class of women graduated, last spring, the alumni magazine reported that most planned "masculine" careers, believing that this was what Yale expected of them. To be a determined imitation, Miss Decter seems to believe, is the best a woman can hope for. Penetrating, witty, and often convincing in her exposure of feminine rationalization, she seems strangely unaware of current struggles to define a specifically feminine identity, to find new ways of thinking and feeling to create larger freedoms for men as well as women.

Elizabeth Janeway might say that Midge Decter, for all her intelligence, is dominated by an outworn mythology. Unlike its competitors in the genre, Mrs. Janeway's survey—historical, sociological, philosophical—of the feminine situation displays no hysteria, betrays no fear, offers no panaceas and no incitements to revolution. It is almost oppressively sane: but sanity these days is an attractive quality.

The unifying theme of this far-ranging treatment is the idea of "social mythology." "Myth supports the status quo (from which it arises) by calling on sacred texts, ancient wisdom, and 'things we all know—instinctively.' At the same time it tries to satisfy the emotional drives that the status quo leaves unfulfilled. It is deeply ambiguous, caught between what is and what we want to come to pass." Social desire shapes the perception of actuality. Thus, the maxim "Woman's place is in the home" delineates a wish while pretending to describe reality. Meaning that women *should* stay home, it ignores the fact that a large proportion of American women do not. Many myths similarly announce what women should do and feel in the guise of depicting their actual state.

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Mythology about women has shaped their self-perception as well as their social possibilities. The lucidity with which Mrs. Janeway analyzes this point is liberating, although the fact itself is dispiriting. What is it women want, really? Chaucer and Boccaccio concluded that women desire *mastery.* Yes, Mrs. Janeway agrees: mastery of their own lives—that power of which society deprives them. They want also, modestly enough, "authority or influence commensurate with their abilities in the external world." Men wish the same; and few of either sex achieve their wish. But for men such desires are socially acceptable. In women they seem dangerous, translated by male fantasy into versions of feminine weakness ("they don't really know what they want") or terrifying power ("they want to take over everything").

The maternal role, as perceived by children (and we've all been children), involves both total power and total compliance. Fear of feminine power, yearning for feminine nurture: these shape the mythology that controls us. The half-hidden preoccupation with power, and evasions of that preoccupation, in autobiography and social theory about women become more explicable. Mrs. Janeway demands that we see the facts; only occasionally does she betray anger at what there is to be seen. Her book marks an important stage beyond polemic in the development of feminism.

It is obviously plausible to do what I've so far done: consider autobiographies by women as a separate species, or books about women by women. But do novels by women, in all their enormous diversity, compose a valid sub-genre? Such studies as Mrs. Janeway's—and, in less serious and extensive ways, many others—explore the effect of male fantasies on female self-conceptions. They do not inquire how, or whether, women's fantasies about themselves differ from men's about them. To look at novels by women as a group suggests the possibility that there are specifically feminine ways of imagining.

Sex—matter-of-fact to lyrical, self-loving and self-hating—is an important subject of women's fiction, serious or otherwise.[3] It *is* possible to write about sex without conveying either experience or emotion: Hortense Calisher does so. For three quarters of *Queenie,* the title character, who has been educated to be a high-class courtesan, claims to be trying to lose her virginity. In the last fourth of the book, she has achieved her goal, but neither this event nor any other makes the slightest difference to anybody, since the characters and their activities are so palpably figments of fancy—something less than imagination—that they can generate no suspension of disbelief. The novel's purpose

[3] QUEENIE, by *Hortense Calisher.* Arbor House. $6.95. THE BELL JAR, by *Sylvia Plath.* Harper & Row. $6.95. SQUANDERING, by *Dorothy Monet.* Holt, Rinehart & Winston. $5.95. WALKING PAPERS, by *Sandra Hochman.* Viking. $6.95. THREE LOVERS, by *Julia O'Faolain.* Coward, McCann & Geoghegan. $5.95. DAUGHTERS OF THE MOON, by *Joan Haggerty.* Bobbs-Merrill. $7.95. LES GUERILLERES, by *Monique Wittig.* Viking. $4.95.

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seems to be the manipulation of its readers rather than the expression of feeling or idea. Self-discovery is here only an implausible fiction.

In books more genuine in their evocation of feeling, one emotional extreme is self-loathing. Self-discovery through sex, as some women describe it, involves learning the hatefulness of the female destiny and nature. The novel that best epitomizes this up-to-date emotion is by a woman dead eight years: Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*. The possibilities that confront its protagonist (*heroines* in fiction are almost as outdated as heroes) are more limited than they would be now; the social and political atmosphere, inasmuch as it exists in the novel, is that of the fifties. Plath's writing is often schoolgirlish, vacillating in tone. But the sensibility expressed is not dismissable. The experience of the book is that of electrocution, "being burned alive through all your nerves." Female sexuality is the center of horror: babies in glass jars, women bleeding in childbirth, Esther herself thrown in the mud by a sadist, hemorrhaging after her single sexual experience. To be a woman is to bleed and burn. After she marries, Buddy Willard assures Esther, she won't want to write poems any more; to be married, she concludes, is to be a slave in a totalitarian state. Womanhood is entrapment, escaped from precariously by artistic activity, escaped from surely only by death.

Dorothy Monet's version is slightly less terrifying. Angela, the novel's narrator and central character, describes herself—in connection with three different men: "he only held me in his arms, like the injured thing I was"; "There was something exhilarating about it; being wholly his thing"; "a muted, half-living thing." The novel implies that the difference between men and women is between the ability to choose and act and the necessity to be acted upon, be a *thing;* woman is at best receiver of man's gifts, at worst victim of his energies. Sandra Hochman imagines "that in some strange way we are all roped into our beds, wired into our beds, held the victim of our personal concentration camps"; her narrator—one marriage ended in annulment, one in widowhood, one in divorce—defines freedom as the possibility of seeing her cruel lover; observes "I kowtow to his whims. . . . I cater to him. Slobber in front of him." Julia O'Faolain's Sally believes that men use you to the hilt but you have to have one, characterizes herself (in terms applicable to most of the women in these novels) as "a sort of mud creature . . . whose native habitat is a swamp of undefined guilt." Sarah, in Joan Haggerty's novel, describes her relation to a man: "A string tied to her rib, the end in his hand and when he jerks it's bad enough, but to *let go!*"

In all these novels, women see themselves as at the disposal of men, to be used, perhaps allowed pleasure, finally cast away. None expresses the slightest awareness of the possibility of living happily without a man; even Plath's Esther Greenwood, determined never to marry, assumes control of her destiny only to break her leg on a ski slope or

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make unsuccessful suicide attempts—she never imagines happiness without a man, only the impossibility of living with one. But there is another side to the self-hatred, guilt, futility these fictional women express. The mirror image of self-hatred is self-love; the woman who insists on her victimization may also revel in her power. The point is most explicit in *Squandering*. Angela's first husband is an art connoisseur who treats her as one more precious object. Her willing and increasing passivity derives from her pleasure in the contemplation of her own beauty. Much later she concludes that her "only power is to receive men into herself, to incubate their dreams and children, to harbor their assets." It is significant power. The image of the chambered nautilus, a series of enclosures constantly growing "beyond the capacities of others," is the image of her strength; as is the title's implication that she is a woman who, like the sea, endlessly squanders her gifts. Always at the disposal of men, receiving or giving, she becomes more powerful the more she asserts her humility.

The sense of power and of self-love in *The Bell Jar* is more concealed, and even more pervasive. Most in control when most helpless, Esther asserts herself in her failed suicide, in the isolation of her madness, in the helpless arrogance of her solitude. In *Walking Papers,* Diana, a "trapped and injured animal," claims also to be "that force inside the lily in the flush of growth." The atmosphere of self-congratulation is never far from her insistence on her misery, emblem of her sensitive femininity. Comets burst across the sky when babies are conceived in *Daughters of the Moon,* and women are mystically allied with natural forces. The Irish girl at the center of *Three Lovers* plays the "wounded bunny-rabbit," but congratulates herself on the role as a way to manipulate men: to use the power which she obscures from others.

The qualitative differences in these recent novels by women bear some relation to the degree of awareness they manifest about such emotional patterns as these. *Daughters of the Moon* seems itself a narcissistic display, an indulgence in fake poetry and exaggerated emotion unredeemed by any clear authorial perspective. The sequences in which Anna conducts a fantasy love affair of sorts with her dead horse epitomizes the self-congratulatory air of contrivance which dominates the novel. Irish Sally, in *Three Lovers,* wallows in introspection and suffers a standard allotment of unhappiness generated by insensitive parents and bloody abortion, but her self-analysis is on the level of *Seventeen* and her creator seems unaware of its inadequacies. *The Bell Jar* is ambiguous. One feels the narrator's failures of self-perception as the author's, yet the novel's authority of image and organization bespeak another level of understanding. Electrocution is a self-dramatizing metaphor but a moving one. The luncheon of caviar and turkey which sickens all its participants is exaggeratedly awful, but so energetically presented that it seems almost to validate

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the disgust that permeates the book. The power of the images compensates for the solipsism of perception.

Dorothy Monet and Sandra Hochman both *use* the conflicts of feminine feeling rather than merely express it, in novels centrally about the experience of being a twentieth-century woman. If the masochism in both books is sometimes overpowering, the persistent note of ironic self-awareness partly compensates for it. Yet irony can seem too easy; in *Walking Papers* especially it is often mechanical; it doesn't cut deep. And the self-deprecation of the characters finally reduces the stature of the books: books which do not make large ultimate claims, do not expect to be long remembered.

A novel of feminine experience which *does* make large claims—although it is physically small—is Monique Wittig's *Les Guérillères,* an effort to create a new feminine (feminist) mythology. The book contains no characters clearly distinguished from one another, only a group of women. Some of them have names, tell stories, perform feats of war; there is an even vaguer group of men. An old myth is in the background: the battle of the sexes. The new mythology concerns female sexuality: the Golden Fleece, reinterpreted, is feminine pubic hair; the lucky horseshoe symbolizes the vulva; female sexual organs are the source of beauty and power. The statement of such ideas; the interspersed pages listing series of feminine first names and the frequent interpolation of a large O, reminder of female sexuality; the effort to give enormous dignity to every feminine action—these techniques run the constant risk of seeming ludicrous. Yet the book demands to be taken seriously on its own terms. Its characters manifest little convincing emotion; its author, creating a new poetry of the female, conveys vivid anger at men (here conquered in a great war), love for women and for "woman" as idea. Assertion of power—total control of their own destinies, triumph in battle over men—becomes the central feminine activity. In order to depict women thus, however, the author is forced a considerable distance from reality—forced, indeed, outside the ordinary bounds of the novel. And her book, avowedly political in motivation, is eerily private in feeling and image.

Novels are not autobiographies, not lyric poems. These novels by women, however, all seem cries from the interior. Personal suffering is also the theme of novels less obviously concerned with the intimate.[4] The search for the self sometimes eventuates in the simple discovery

[4] CHILDREN, YOU ARE VERY LITTLE, by *Betsy Drake Grant.* Atheneum. $6.95. THE WINTERING, by *Joan Williams.* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $7.50. BIRDS OF AMERICA, by *Mary McCarthy.* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $6.95. WONDERLAND, by *Joyce Carol Oates.* Vanguard. $7.95. THE SEA CHANGE OF ANGELA LEWES, by *Cynthia Propper Seton.* Norton. $5.95. THE ABDUCTION, by *Maxine Kumin.* Harper & Row. $6.95. MRS. PALFREY AT THE CLAREMONT, by *Elizabeth Taylor.* Viking. $5.95. ENCHANTMENT, by *Linda Grace Hoyer.* Houghton-Mifflin. $5.95

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that "female" can be taken to mean "victim." Betsy Drake Grant grabs for the heartstrings with a story of a young girl suffering from the separation of her parents (psychotic mother, self-indulgent father) and from the substitute care of a sadistic grandmother. All the characters talk exactly alike in this orgy of pathos and whimsy; the child Lucia, desperate in her search for love, takes care of her little brother, tries to take care of her parents when she gets a chance, wins temporary approval from male contemporaries for a brief career as thief, and ends in a state of inconclusive misery equivalent to the one she started in. Feminine identity here depends on relationship, but the self-indulgence of this masochistic fantasy ("I'm bad, I'm a bad child! Isham, please look at me. I'm bad I'm bad—") denies the authority of its assertions.

Joan Williams depicts a girl at a later stage of adolescence, in a novel equally sentimental and self-indulgent, though less relentlessly cute, and equally obsessed with relationship as the source of identity. In this case, the "relationship" is between a college girl and a famous older man, a writer. The balance of power is interesting, and power, as usual, is the concealed theme. The girl supplies vitality, the man offers what passes for wisdom. He thus "takes care" of his adorer without compromising her need for self-direction; she has it both ways. Williams lacks the courage of her fantasies, though; she allows her couple no sexual consummation, and kills off the writer as soon as the girl is willing to risk commitment to him.

Mary McCarthy switches the sexes, giving us an adolescent boy as protagonist. He is singularly epicene, his only clear sexual act or feeling involving his decision to refrain from masturbation while his mother is between husbands, it being "unfair" for him to receive sexual satisfaction while she cannot. The unavailability of salt codfish in little wooden boxes, the absence of beanpots and buttons from a village store, the bombing of Vietnam, the death of a Great Horned Owl: this curious assortment of images justifies the final assertion that nature as well as God is dead. Sentence by sentence, McCarthy continues to write with accuracy and force; yet these are just the qualities lacking in the novel's total thrust. Reducing the personal struggle for identity to a joke, since the struggling character is no more than a fictional device—sometimes target, sometimes instrument of the author's angry wit—*Birds of America* fails in its attempt to deal with global issues, and fails as a novel because it insists on using people and events for vague ideological purposes.

How far, and how, can the novel deviate from the personal? Monique Wittig's revolutionary tract substitutes poetry for personality, provides images rather than drama, and creates after all an apolitical effect, her book seeming the outgrowth of emotion, not ideology. Mary McCarthy's images, on the other hand, lack the power of poetry and the authority of actuality. Salt cod, buttons, and beanpots

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are readily available in my New England town; if they weren't, I'd be annoyed but hardly passionate. I am willing to grieve for the death of owls, but McCarthy doesn't show me why I should. The bombing of Vietnam goes on and on, becomes our code for horror, but we want novelists to interpret such codes, to restore them to immediate reality, and McCarthy seems to write in code herself: urbane, sometimes betraying passion, but never exposing passion's roots.

Yet code writing has its power too, and the depersonalized can express violent emotion. Joyce Carol Oates's *Wonderland* is the most ambitious of these novels, and the least manifestly "feminine," a perverse *Bildungsroman* whose male protagonist and multitudinous other characters have little reality but much vitality. Their lack of reality is essential to their literary effectiveness. Jesse, the central character, reveals at one point that "in the end he did not know what a 'story' was. He had the idea that what people thought were stories were fragments from shattered wholes, the patterns, the brain waves, of a certain man at a certain time in his life, the record of his controlled and uncontrolled inner life: therefore all writing was autobiography, wasn't it?" *Wonderland* itself seems a record of brain waves. It treats nightmare as commonplace reality, given the psychic distance which declares objectivity. If the "story" is unconvincing, finally boring, its images have the force of inner truth. They are images of horror: a man murdering wife and children; an enormously fat family, endlessly eating, the monstrous daughter possessed by a vision of her monstrous father's desire to consume her; a young doctor standing before a motel mirror and cutting himself with a razor—right cheek, left cheek, chest, belly, genitals. Search for identity, failure of relationship, once more: the protagonist is left drifting in a rowboat with a dying daughter who doesn't know who he is. The book is a series of assaults on the reader's emotional capacities. Resenting their relentlessness, conscious that their meaning does not build, only repeats, feeling that the novel lacks formal control, one yet cannot escape the impact of these insistent demonstrations of failed human contact, incomplete identity.

"It's self-love that is the issue," remarks a character in *The Sea Change of Angela Lewes*. Self-love is always the issue: Jesse, in *Wonderland,* never manages it; Angela Lewes struggles to achieve it; Lucy Starr, in *The Abduction,* substitutes claims on the love of others for healthy self-regard. Modish in subject matter (the problems of black children in the inner city, the plight of the middle-aged woman), *The Abduction,* exploiting feeling, thus makes feeling unreal and ridicules its characters' claims to *have* selves. Angela Lewes, on the other hand, is a middle-aged woman one can believe in. There is ideology in the background of this book as of Mary McCarthy's and Monique Wittig's, and little poetic energy to redeem it. But this is a novel not of images but of action, in the Aristotelian sense. A compelling inner movement drives it, compensating for unsureness of

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tone, occasional implausibility of language, unnecessary structural contrivance. The movement, from self-abnegation to self-regard, involves relinquishing conventional social roles and the hidden power contained in them, relinquishing also the pose of powerlessness in wifehood, and accepting responsibility for one's own life. Although various people in this densely-populated novel duplicate this movement in some form, interest focuses on Angela, whose freedom from hampering assumptions is declared by her taking not one but two lovers. This development underlines a feminine attitude implicit in most of these novels: women (like men) want everything; the peculiarly feminine form of hubris is to want total love and total independence simultaneously. Not for women, if this group of books is representative, fantasies of lonely triumph over the elements, over competitors. Triumph involving isolation would be defeat; love is the ultimate femnine achievement. In the revolutionary vision (*Les Guérillères*), "love" is community, relationships among women more important than contact between the sexes. But isolation is at best, in all these books, an arena for endurance; solitude, though it may provide temporary escape, is never to be welcomed as a fate.

It may be imagined, and feared, as the fate of the old. Elizabeth Taylor's fantasy of old age is a horror of solitude. The old residents of a London hotel scheme to conceal their isolation, contrive and pretend in order to enlarge their scanty contact with the vital and uncaring young. Loss of love is psychic death. Mrs. Palfrey, suffering it, is miraculously resurrected through accidental relationship with a young man willing to accept the obligations of friendship; her literal death, at the novel's end, is comparatively irrelevant. Painfully tedious and trivial though the novel is, it offers glimpses of the genuine terror of loneliness. Loneliness, however, is not a necessity of old age. Linda Grace Hoyer, with Belle, an old woman, as her central character, exploring once more the familiar issues of self-love and relationship, locates loneliness in youth and claims increasing fulfillment with increasing age, despite the poignancies of human loss. "A failure to smile is, for a woman, the final failure." This is the dictum of Belle's father, and it becomes hers. To smile is to placate, but also to affirm. Belle, in her youth, is ceaselessly informed of her inadequacies. Even in her old age, her husband continues to tell her that she is "a bad woman," in contrast to her mother, who was "a good woman." But old age provides the freedom not to care, the sense of unequivocal success created by an enduring relationship with son and grandchildren which fosters self-confidence.

This is not a sentimental view of old age. Presented in a mannered prose which seems often unduly guarded, it guardedly suggests that one can never be loved enough, that satisfaction is a mirage. The old woman finally gets the horse she has always wanted—but she is too old to ride it. Sandra Hochman's central character has a fantasy of marry-

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ing a horse in a field; Joan Haggerty expends a good deal of whimsy on an erotic horse-fantasy. These imaginary horses embody longed-for sources of energy; it is a relatively rare feminine realism to admit the possibility that longed-for energies cannot necessarily be used.

Is there something necessarily "feminine" about recent novels by women? Most of these books seem not altogether satisfactory as literary experiences, but so do most books by men. Misery and failure are not peculiar to one sex, nor is preoccupation with power. To generalize about such themes one must rely on velleities which won't bear much weight. What may be most characteristic about writing by women in our time is the emotional equivalent and consequence of centuries of social restriction, a special atmosphere of resentment expressed and concealed in many ways, emblem of the feminine condition, both source and underminer of literary energy.

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Report

Letter from England

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING BOOKS I have read recently is Leszek Kolakowski's *Marxism and Beyond.* Since this book is a collection of essays, mostly about problems of Marxist philosophy, originally published in Poland in the late fifties, its connection with the contemporary English situation may seem a bit remote. Yet there is one obvious connection in that Kolakowski, having been expelled from his chair at Warsaw University in 1968, now lives in England, and is a research fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. One salutes this act of hospitality by a notoriously rich college, that used to be accused of not spending its money in any very responsible way, but which in recent years has offered its splendid facilities to a steady succession of visiting scholars. Kolakowski can only be a great enrichment of the intellectual life of Oxford; I'm not qualified to assess his work professionally, but *Marxism and Beyond* is the kind of book that non-philosophers can understand and learn from, given a little intellectual effort, which makes it like much of the traditional mainstream of Western philosophy and significantly unlike the highly specialized and technical exercises of contemporary English and American philosophy. And since, whether one likes it or not, Marxism is now the dominant intellectual orthodoxy of much of the world, outside English-speaking areas, one is glad of so humane and discriminating a commentator as Kolakowski. His book came out in an English hard-cover edition in 1969, but I read it in a recent paperback edition put out under the Paladin imprint, a distinguished series that includes such classic works as Norman Cohn's *Pursuit of the Millenium,* not to mention *The Female Eunuch* by my celebrated colleague at the University of Warwick, Dr. Germaine Greer. As I said in my last Letter, foreign ideas are slowly getting into English intellectual life, and Kolakowski's are of a high quality and importance and worth disseminating.

At this point, however, I start turning sceptical. What happens, one wants to know, to all these rich ideas, once they get into the culture? The answer seems to be, not very much; mostly they lie around, are fashionably misunderstood, are alluded to in reviews or articles, or talked about in lectures or seminars, but don't on the whole have any great fertilizing effect. I'm thinking in the context of those great cultural critics, who for over a century have called for the free play of mind and a ready openness to new ideas if the intellectual health of the society is to be preserved: Arnold in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" and *Culture and Anarchy,* Eliot consciously

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taking up Arnold's burden in the preface to *The Sacred Wood,* and F. R. Leavis continuing the tradition in the nineteen-thirties. In the sense in which they would have understood it, English cultural life is not in a particularly healthy state, despite the unprecedented expansion of higher education, the dissemination of egg-head paperbacks, the high quality of the best of British television, and all the other items that one can put in the credit column. Of course, this is a rather question-begging formulation; arguably there are other kinds of cultural health than those understood by Arnold, Eliot and Leavis, and we may be in the full flush of some of them. Nevertheless, in the interests of clarity I shall try to describe some of the things that are wrong with the traditional literate culture; not, indeed, in a spirit of apocalyptic gloom and forboding, but rather as a surveyor trying to do a professional job will describe the condition of an impressive old property that is now in a bad state of repair.

Throughout this century there has been a steady disappearance of the organs of opinion through which new ideas circulate. No doubt the spacious Victorian days, when a new book could be buried under thousands and thousands of distinguished words from George Eliot or Arnold or Bagehot or Leslie Stephen, were rather too much of a good thing. But now we have reached a point where a critic or scholar who thinks that a new book in one of the central human disciplines is worth five or six thousand words of discussion will have great difficulty finding an editor who can give him a fraction of that space, outside an academic or specialist journal. The disappearance of literary and intellectual reviews over the years is a melancholy story, and the only one today which has any affinity with the great Victorian organs is *Encounter,* of which more in a moment. Granted, most serious new books deserve five or six hundred words, rather than five or six thousand, and until a few years back they would generally get that amount in one of the weekly reviews, which are often thought of as in some degree compensating for the virtual disappearance in England of the kind of monthly or quarterly that appeals to an educated but non-specialist readership, and which still seems to flourish in Continental Europe. Specifically, I am referring to weeklies like the *New Statesman,* the *Spectator,* the *Listener,* plus those Sunday newspapers (published in London but nationally distributed) that have a large magazine element about them, notably the *Observer, Sunday Times,* and the *Sunday Telegraph.* In all of these the book-review space has noticeably shrunk in recent years, which I find a very sinister development. Out of all the books that might reasonably claim attention, only a proportion get reviewed, and the selection is often made on merely fashionable grounds: I can think of a number of important books that haven't been reviewed at all. This is a bad state of affairs which imposes a sensation of anomie or non-existence on an author, and is a mode of censorship, however inadvertent, which prevents readers

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from knowing that a book exists just as effectively as the political or religious censorship that prevails in totalitarian societies. (I have no personal complaints so far on this score, I might add, but I am not sanguine about the future.) Literary editors are obviously unhappy about not having enough space, though they are apt to be disingenuous in invoking that as the sole reason for excluding important books from notice; if one has space to review only four books out of a possible twelve, then one has to exercise some conscious choice about which four to include and which eight to exclude. Literary editors have a special problem in that they are divided between their responsibility to public intellectual standards, which should ensure that as many books get noticed as possible—which is not at all the same as giving them favorable reviews—and their journalistic attachment to the concept of "news." Thus, a new book by X is deemed to be "news" in itself, even though it is patently rubbish, so that in the week that it appears X's book will be given plenty of space, thereby excluding other and perhaps more intrinsically deserving books, even though the reviewers, who are usually honest men with reasonably high standards, will be using that space to damn it. For whatever reason, the shelves of literary editors' offices are full of books that ought to have been reviewed but were not. In 1957, Frank Kermode's first book, *Romantic Image,* was widely and enthusiastically reviewed; it was evident that it heralded a remarkable new talent in criticism, and within a few years Kermode was recognized as the leading British critic of his generation. But now I suspect that a book like *Romantic Image* might be dismissed by a hard-pressed literary editor as rather too esoteric and left on the shelf, since space was needed for a big new popular biography.

No doubt the literary editors would give far wider coverage to current books if they could, but they are in the hands of the men who run the papers, who seem to be convinced that book pages don't do much to sell newspapers or magazines, and that space is better devoted to discussing TV programmes or pop music. The British so-called quality press has suffered in a peculiarly painful way from the ravages of inflation; it is heavily dependent on advertising, and although it doesn't sell widely in terms of numbers it needs to keep its sales steadily expanding amongst the kind of readership the advertisers are interested in. So editors are not merely looking for new readers, but new kinds of readers, who are probably not very interested in the level of intellectual discourse that was once taken for granted in educated circles. Indeed, it may well bore them, and being boring is the one thing that all the media, at whatever cultural level they operate, are terrified of. There is an immediate contrast here with Victorian conditions, since Carlyle or George Eliot or Bagehot were undeniably very boring in their off moments, but their readers must have had a fairly high tolerance of temporary boredom and were

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prepared to wait patiently for the next interesting bit. In their terror of being boring the communicators run to the opposite extreme, of being trendy. I don't know how extant this word currently is in America but its semantic history in British usage, though short, is significant. Half a mile or so from my house in Warwick there is a small boutique that proudly calls itself "Trendy," which dates back to the time—hardly more than three or four years ago—when the word had generally positive associations of up-to-dateness and being part of the splendid swinging scene. Now however it has become a term of unique opprobrium; at a faculty meeting a few months ago I heard a colleague who has been teaching some avant-garde courses fall into a state of impressive rage at another colleague who in all innocence referred to these same courses as "trendy." But trendiness is always a vice of other people, so a typical paradigm might read: "I have an innate sense of what is immediately relevant"; "you are fashionable"; "he is trendy." There is an even more lethal version of "trendy," which is "trendy-leftie," where an addiction to smart ephemeral cultural styles goes along with an automatic adherence to fashionably progressive causes. Although it might be thought that a phrase like "trendy-leftie" must place the user as belonging to the New Right, like Kingsley Amis or John Braine, it isn't necessarily so, since such words drop with remarkable ease from the lips of an unenthusiastic Labour voter like myself. Indeed, some of the smartest attacks on trendiness have issued from the ranks of the Old Left, notably from the poet and critic Roy Fuller, now Professor of Poetry at Oxford, who preserves intact his original left-wing commitment of the nineteen-thirties. His lectures at Oxford have gone in for wholesale demolition of the idols of his undergraduate audience, much to their discontent, and Fuller must be the first intellectual in England to speak harshly in public of the Beatles.

A middle-aged maverick like Fuller valuably prevents the scene from looking too uniform; his reviews in the *Listener* are always worth reading and show that the spirit of critical independence, upheld long ago by Arnold, can survive in an age of instant cultural over-exposure. The *Listener* is still one of our more respectable weeklies, in contrast to the *New Statesman,* which has now fallen on evil days under the strident editorship of Richard Crossman, a hectoring Labour politician who frankly uses the magazine as a vehicle for his own views; Crossman has dissipated the *New Statesman's* traditional combination of intellectual disinterestedness with firm socialist commitment, that made it appeal to many readers who were by no means wholly identified with its political stance. Now it seems to be losing a lot of readers (including, after many years, me). The *Listener* is in a rather different category: it is published by the BBC and reprints a lot of material first broadcast on television or radio programmes. Some of this is first-class, particularly the Third Pro-

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gramme talks (the Third Programme, surviving in a somewhat truncated form, is still undoubtedly one of the best features in British cultural life). Its book-review section is very inadequate, in the way I have just been describing, but the magazine is in other respects a useful medium for ideas, despite a tendency to trendy presentation. And there is something impressive about the way in which a BBC publication carries radio and TV reviews that are often very critical of BBC productions. Here, too, is a practical survival of the Arnoldian spirit. I also enjoy its correspondence columns, which carry some highly polemical and intellectually taxing debates.

If the *Listener* is one of the places where one can pick up important ideas and arguments, *Encounter* is another. *Encounter* is still liable to be dismissed by English liberals as an organ of the C.I.A., which is unjust, even though several years ago some C.I.A. money did filter through the magazine's then backers. I particularly value the European coverage that *Encounter* offers, and its combination of literary, philosophical and political interests. Of course, *Encounter* has its biases, shown more in what it doesn't print than in what it does, and these were indicated by Conor Cruise O'Brien a few years ago. That is to say, one is more likely to find attacks on the excesses of the German student movement than on American foreign policy, and *Encounter's* basic ideology is no doubt a somewhat fossilized version of the American anti-communist liberalism of the nineteen-fifties that looks anachronistic in the seventies. Still, *Encounter* is one of our least dispensible intellectual properties. Another, I am slightly surprised to find myself remarking, is the *Times Literary Supplement.* For years no-one has been in the habit of speaking well of the *TLS;* the anonymity of its reviews, a survival of a nineteenth-century tradition, has been often attacked and is stubbornly persisted in. But in the present depleted cultural situation the *TLS* is essential because it does review most of the books that come out, even though it can take months over it. It also regularly reviews books in foreign languages, which no other non-specialist publication does, and it is prepared to give plenty of space to its leading review-articles. And it isn't afraid of tough subjects: thus, the current number of the *TLS* reprints the whole of a long lecture by Isaiah Berlin on Georges Sorel, presumably on the encouraging assumption that it is likely to be of interest to more people than students of French political thought. However imperfectly and unreliably, the *TLS* does embody the notion of an intellectual community, as something transcending the academic specialization that goes with an expanding university sector.

The whole concept of an intellectual community is liable, of course, to be attacked as lamentably elitist. Indeed, I am aware that I have been upholding an ideal of literate culture that many advanced thinkers think is well on the way out, to be replaced by a mass culture

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of sounds and images. Maybe; but it's striking how many words are used to say that words are now finished, how overpoweringly verbal the post- or anti-verbal modes are. Certainly the empire of the word has shrunk from its pre-electronic extent, but I for one can't imagine it vanishing. A related and more substantial attack is the one that says that the Arnoldian notion of a disinterested culture is an oppressive sham, the ideology of a declining rentier class that is determined to hold on to its position and authority. True culture doesn't yet exist, or if it does is to be found among the young, or the workers, or the peasants of the Third World. It's one of the peculiar merits of Kolakowski's book that he anticipates and defuses such naive and over-simple views, that he shows that intellectual disinterestedness is both possible and desirable in any context, and that there will always be a place for the critical intelligence, regardless of ideology. An English or American reader will recognize in Kolakowski an Arnoldian spirit arising out of the harsh climate of post-Stalinist Poland, and being reconcilable at the same time with Marxist commitment. To adapt a tag of Carlyle's, one can now tell trendy-lefties of all ages, "Close thy Marcuse: open thy Kolakowski." His pessimistic, lucid, ironic, humane and basically grown-up spirit seems to me in tune with the current mood in England: the trendy sloganizing of the sixties is already looking old-fashioned.

—BERNARD BERGONZI

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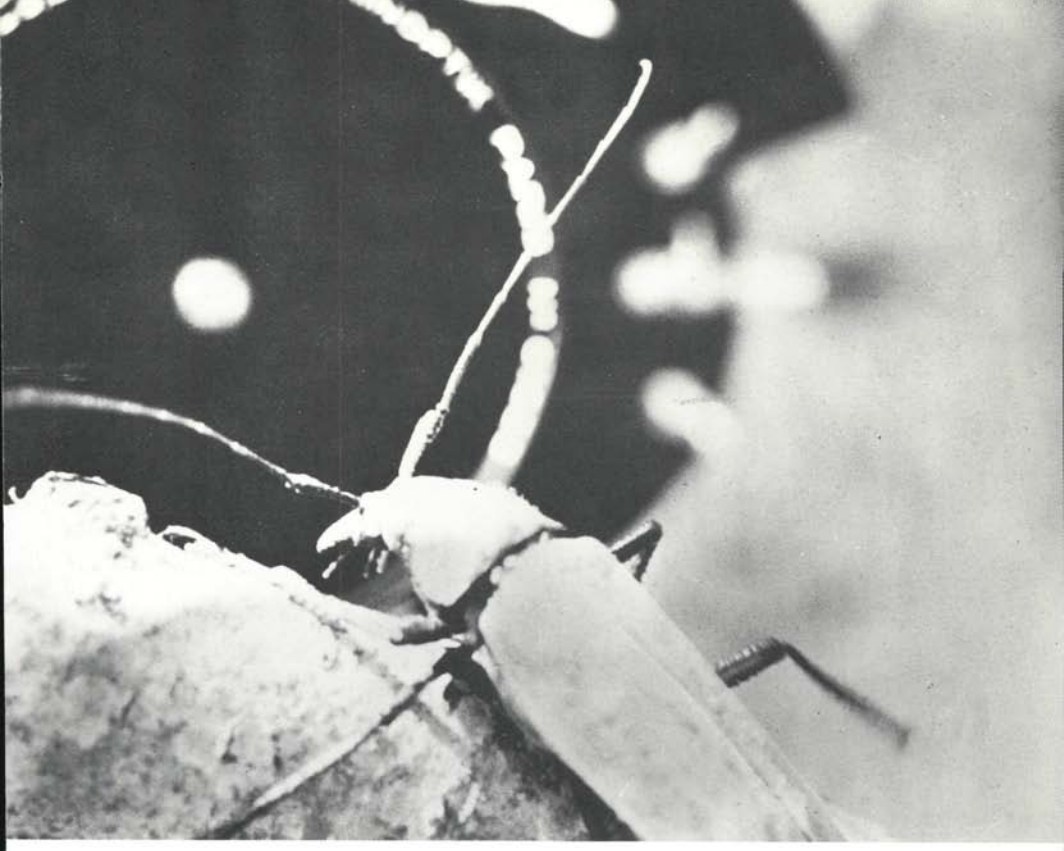

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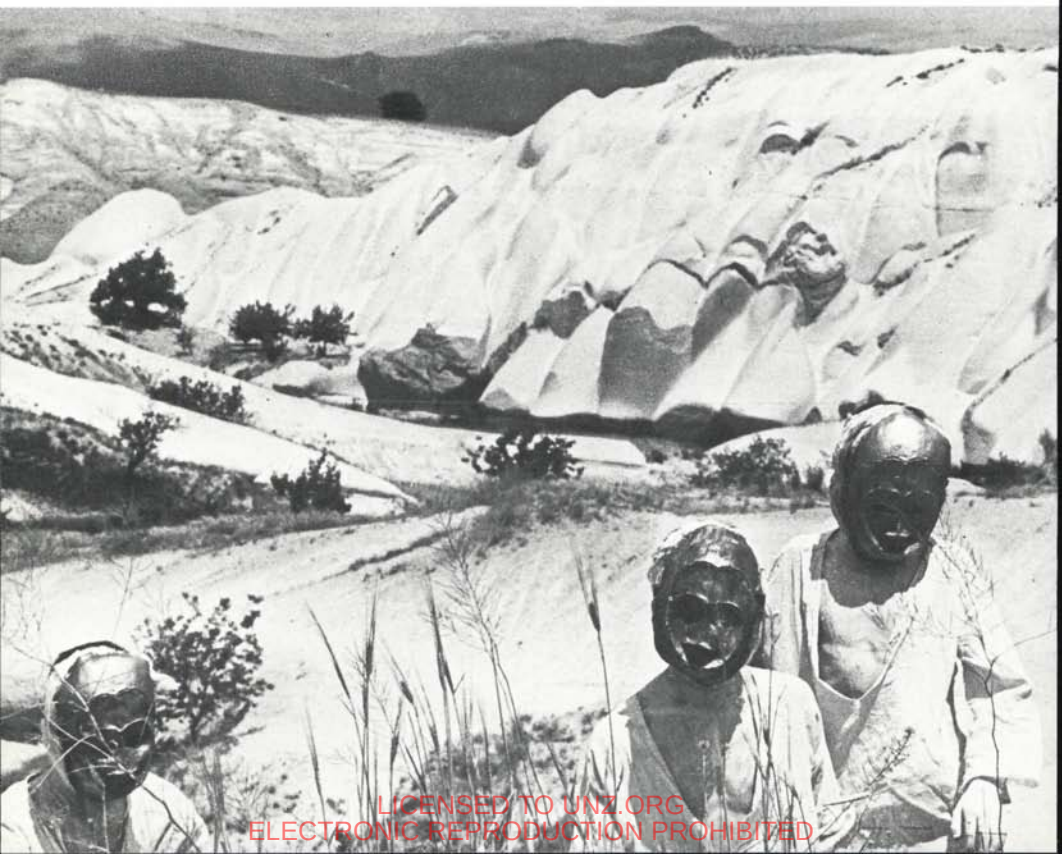

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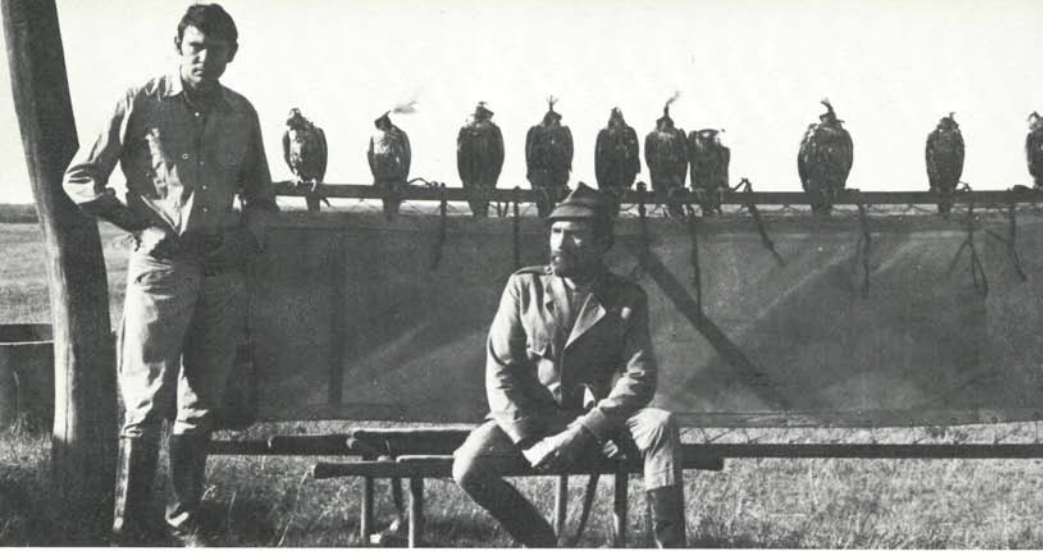

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